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THE RIFLEMAN;

OR,

ADVENTURES OF PERCY BLAKE.

BY

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"There was an ancient sage philosopher,
Who had read Alexander Ross over;
And swore the world, as he could prove,
Was made of fighting and of love."

HUDIBRAS.

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THE YOUNG RIFLEMAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE IRISH BRIGADE.

IT is customary, I believe, with authors who have but little to relate, to press into their service every possible resource of the literary art; that, by the charm of their eloquence, they may hide the paucity of their material. The contrary, however, being my case, I trust the reader will be content to receive a plain, unvarnished tale of military life, instead of a flowing dissertation *de omnibus rebus*, which I have neither ability nor inclination to cook up for his amusement.

I was born in a small country town, in the south of Ireland, which has furnished more officers to the army than any place in the United Kingdom of thrice its importance. I leave it to casuists to determine whether this was owing to the proverbial pugnacity of the Tipperary boys, or to the idle and unoccupied life of the small gentry, whose family pride made them scorn that trade which was best calculated to repair their family indigence. Certain it is, however, that the soil of many lands has been moistened by the blood, or has witnessed the sufferings, of many of my townsmen and schoolfellows, who began their career in life as I did myself, about the commencement of that tremendous struggle, in which the genius and good fortune of Napoleon sank, at length, under the wealth, the power, and the energies of Great Britain.

My family is traditionally said to be of Spanish descent; but, without looking so far back into the misty days of Eld, it will be sufficient, as an appropriate introduction to the sayings and doings of my own checkered existence, to state that it was one of the numerous Irish families ruined by a too faithful adherence to the cause of the Stuarts; the battle of the Boyne having effectually disposed of a handsome estate, which had belonged to a Catholic branch of the Blakes for many preceding ages.

After that celebrated "passage of arms," my pugnacious ancestor, William Blake, who had exchanged his "dirty acres" for the doubtful honour of following King James to the field, obtained a company from the French monarch in the Irish Brigade, and continued to

serve in that glorious band of expatriated heroes for several years, till an ardent desire to see his family and native seat once more brought him again to Ireland. His relations, however, were all dispersed or dead, his estate forfeited to the crown by that loyalty to his sovereign which, under the new reign, was called rebellion; and marrying soon after a lady in London, with whom he received a moderate fortune, he gave up foreign adventure and settled for the remainder of his days in his native country. From this gentleman I am lineally descended.

One brother, a sister and myself were the last living of thirteen children. We loved one another with great affection; but as I was the youngest by ten years, their love for me had more of a parental character, while mine for them was mingled with that deep respect necessarily inspired by their more advanced age and superior attainments. They were both married, and immersed in the cares of the world, when my infant memory first began to dawn; and at a very early period of my boyhood, I was led to think myself a person of some consequence, by having several playfellows of my own age and size, who invariably saluted me as their uncle, and treated me with all the deference due to so revered a title.

Whether this early habit of authority and protectorship had any influence in imparting to me the steadiness and decision of character and principle of self-reliance which have marked my subsequent career, I leave to the discussion of metaphysicians and ideologists; sufficient for me is the conviction that, without this upholding principle, mercifully implanted in my nature, I must have sunk long since under the strange trials that have signalized my scramble through life.

At an early period of my existence, though I read with unbounded voracity such works as pleased my fancy and captivated my imagination, I held everything in the shape of a task in horror; having a special aversion to the confinement, and, as I foolishly deemed it, the drudgery of schools. Hence I took every opportunity of playing truant, and never felt myself completely happy but when roving at liberty through the fields, by the banks of the river, over bog, heath, and mountain; indulging in dreams and reveries without end, fighting over again the battles of the Greeks and Trojans, or dwelling with delight on the adventures of Romulus and Remus, the fortitude of Mutius Scævola, the magnanimity of Horatius Cocles, but, above all, on the glorious self-devotion of Leonidas. With these classical reminiscences were mixed up the mongrel compositions of a later age, such as Don Belianis of Greece, the Seven Champions of Christendom, and other specimens of what may be called mediæval fiction; but not without some little appreciation of their respective merits, as compared with the pure and classic models.

With the exception of the injury I was unconsciously doing myself by the neglect of my school duties, these solitary rambles were of a perfectly innocent character; for, absorbed as I was in heroic and poetical imaginings, the idea of anything in the shape of depredations on orchards or gardens never once entered my mind. On the contrary, I always left home with some creature comfort in my pocket,

in the shape of a cake, or a few apples, with which I was perfectly content for the whole day; caring little for any other nourishment, till night brought me back, tired, hungry, and penitent, to the *casa paterna*. As Lamartine says of himself, "J'avais la fièvre perpétuelle de la liberté; j'avais le délire de la nature." Such, indeed, was the extreme simplicity of my enjoyment, consisting in little more than the mental excitement occasioned by incessant locomotion, which is to this day a favourite luxury of mine, that the country-people looked upon me generally as a respectable and harmless sort of lunatic, and I was universally known amongst them by the title of the "fairy-hunter."

This *soubriquet* arose, no doubt, from the partiality I always evinced for those conical, round-headed hills so numerous in many parts of Ireland, and which are commonly called Danish forts and fairy-mounts. The traditionary lore connected with these curious elevations is redolent of "Faëry," and some of our Irish romancists have made ample use of it. Their great attraction to me was their commanding height, their green velvet sod, and the uninterrupted day-dreams I indulged in on their lofty summits, so far removed from the small-beer doings of this work-day world.

Here, also, my schoolfellows and I had many a pleasant sham fight, when, mustering in large numbers, "on a sunshine holiday," and dividing our forces into two equal bodies of Danes and Irish, under distinguished leaders, of whom I had always the honour of being one, we struggled hard in many a fierce assault for the mastery of the fairy-mount. Nor were these pastimes always of a sham description; for we not unfrequently had to do battle in good earnest with boys not belonging to our clique; who, envious of our real or fancied superiority, often provoked us with taunts and other hostile demonstrations. We accordingly fought many a desperate action with the young ragamuffins of two notorious suburbs—one very properly called "Dirty Lane," and the other the "Spital;" the latter of which, from the showers of stones always flying there, we christened the "Dardanelles."

These battles of ours were sometimes fought in the church-yard, when every tombstone became a redoubt, and the church itself a citadel; and sometimes in the "old gardens." These were spacious wastes, which had once been the gardens of houses and of families long since gone to decay, but which now lay either entirely open, or badly fenced against the intrusion of idlers, who resorted thither at all hours of the day, either to play pitch-and-toss, or to enjoy those gymnastic exercises, such as running, jumping, putting the stone, &c. &c., in which the Irish have been always considered to excel.

It is not, however, to be supposed that I enjoyed this truant disposition of mine with impunity. Though indulged by my father, as his last and favourite child, with more than usual freedom, my frequent absence from school was a source of great uneasiness to him; but, unwilling to punish me himself, he generally left the disagreeable task to the schoolmaster, who had frequently to send a detachment of boys in search of me, with stern directions to bring me back *vi et*

armis, if necessary, to the hateful confinement and drudgery of the school-room.

This academy, to which I had been sent as a boarder, by my own desire, in preference to entering business, as my father wished, was an establishment of high repute, to which the principal gentry of the town and neighbourhood sent their sons for education. Here, though passionately fond of the literature of the ancients, which I devoured incessantly through the medium of translations, I never made much progress in their languages, having acquired from my school studies, like many other great men, "little Latin and less Greek." But what was infinitely more useful to me in after-life, I became thoroughly grounded in French, and even respectably acquainted with Spanish; our French teacher, who had been originally intended for the Catholic priesthood, having graduated at St. Omer, and also at Salamanca.

CHAPTER II.

THE RECRUITING SERGEANT.

I OFTEN look back with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret on my first false step in rejecting my father's wish that I should go into business: regret at the wanton sacrifice I made of comfort, independence, and perhaps wealth and civic honours; and pleasure at the career I thus opened for myself of strange and foreign adventure, and practical knowledge of those singular vicissitudes with which the world abounds, and of which I have had a share sufficiently ample to satisfy the most romantic imagination.

I must, however, say, in extenuation of my folly, that the scenes and recollections of my childhood were all of a martial character, calculated to unfit the mind for the ordinary routine and sober relations of life. Then our domestic traditions were all of a military cast, the decline of our family having sprung from a too heroic adherence to the fortunes of a fallen race. My father himself was an old retired officer of the army, and loved to indulge in relations of foreign adventure, especially in connection with Prince Ferdinand and the Battle of Minden, where he had been desperately wounded. His ordinary costume was somewhat allied to the Kevenhüller-hat and Ramlies-wig style of the Marlborough military dandies; while, instead of an ordinary walking-stick, he generally carried over his shoulder a long, goldheaded cane, a faint vestige of the old espartoon; and when of an evening, by his own fireside, he indulged in a sober glass, and a song that smacked of the German wars, I listened delighted to strains that fired my young blood, but of which I can now recollect nothing more than such scraps as this:

"All hail to great Cæsar!
 Long life, love, and pleasure!
 May the king live for ever!
 'Tis the better for us, boys!"

Or else the following jovial chorus :

“ Then why should we quarrel for riches,
Or any such glittering toys ?
A light heart and a thin pair of breeches,
Will go through the world, my brave boys.”

When I add to these incentives, the absolute manner in which I was allowed to indulge in my taste for chivalrous reading, to the total exclusion of everything practically useful; and the unrestrained freedom with which I was permitted to ramble over moor and mountain, field and meadow, absorbed in day-dreams, and thick-coming fancies; the reader will not be surprised that my young mind should have received a bias so decided and so durable, that, even to this hour, it imparts a tinge to the sere and yellow leaf into which my days have fallen.

But my wayward imagination was further impressed, fascinated as it were, with the daily occurrences of a pugnacious character springing from the semi-barbarous state of society which then prevailed in Ireland, and of which a mere English reader can have no adequate conception. Long before Father Matthew had ever dreamt of the modern miracle he has since accomplished, when the unlimited abuse of ardent spirits kept up to fever heat the passions of an excitable people, private feuds and quarrels were of constant recurrence; the pistol of the gentleman and the wattle of the plebeian making frequent inroads on the peace of society, and carrying mourning and desolation into many a dwelling.

In addition to these occasional interludes, the grand drama of faction warfare was carried on with a degree of method and martial tactics, unknown, perhaps, in any other country beneath the sun. A register, something like an adjutant's roster, seems to have been kept by the infatuated leaders of the two great factions which divided the country for miles around; and in this not only the numbers, names, and physical qualities of their respective adherents were carefully registered, but also the days of battle appointed for months previous, to admit of necessary preparations. During this interval, the most active partisans on both sides were in constant requisition; beating up for recruits, lecturing on military science, inspiring the timid and exhorting the brave, to prepare for the glorious day that was to crown with triumph their respective clans; for defeat or dishonour never seems to have formed a part of their anticipations.

During this period of combustion every description of business was, of course, sadly neglected; irregularity and drunkenness increased, and the whole framework of society was disorganized, till at length the day, “big with the fate” of one or other of the contending factions, arrived. This, as a matter of course, was a fair-day, when vast numbers of the peasantry arrived from all quarters, with horses, black cattle, pigs, poultry, and other country produce, for the market; and at the same time, ready for all-glorious war as soon as the vulgar business of sale and purchase should be despatched.

Innumerable wounds and occasional deaths were the sad results of these ferocious battles, in the course of which deeds of individual heroism were performed that would have immortalized the actors in a worthy cause: but, alas! the strength and courage that might have wrought miracles under the sacred inspiration of patriotism produced nothing in these suicidal struggles but private misery, general wretchedness, and dissolute habits, which laid a sure foundation for the fearful ruin that has since fallen upon the unhappy land.

Breathing thus, as it were, a martial atmosphere, where every individual thought himself justified in taking the law into his own hands; and the family idiosyncrasy being, moreover, essentially bellicose, my longing for a military life was natural enough. But the culminating point of my destiny, which gave the finishing touch to my incipient military mania, was the arrival in our town of my maternal uncle; who, having run away from school several years before, and enlisted as a private soldier, had returned to his native place in all the seductive glory of a recruiting sergeant.

In these degenerate days, when one hears of nothing but temperance societies and peace congresses, when the military virtues seem to be scouted, and manhood cried down, as if by general consent, it is refreshing to cast a glance back upon those gallant fellows, whose united valour gave a splendour to the British arms which they had never attained before, and perhaps never will again.

Mick Flaherty was one of those old war bull-dogs, who were so accustomed to sport with death, and to brave the grim tyrant to his very teeth, that enterprise and danger never came amiss to them; though their actions in civil life were too often looked upon by the ordinary run of mankind as the result of madness or intoxication.

On many trying occasions, Mick had displayed such admirable courage and address, that, even at the commencement of his career, he would have been elevated far beyond his humble position of a private soldier; but, unfortunately, he had two propensities, which always operated as a drag-chain to his ambition and a stumbling-block to his valour. Most unfortunate men, when lamenting their evil destiny, and anathematizing some besetting vice to which they attribute it, are in the habit of exclaiming, "That's the rock upon which I split!" Now my poor uncle had two rocks to split upon, one of which was women, and the other wine: either is enough, Heaven knows, to do any man's business; but Sergeant Flaherty was never thoroughly satisfied, unless he combined both, and then the consequences were what any rational man may anticipate.

In spite of all this, however, his distinguished conduct in the field was rewarded with the worsted epaulette; and as Sergeant Flaherty he was sent home to recruit, at a period when the urgency of the service called for redoubled exertion on the part of all who were interested in the glory of the British arms.

A better theatre could not possibly be chosen for the trial of my uncle's wheedling powers than the town of Tipperary; and here, on a market-day, at the head of his recruiting party, he exhibited his martial figure, and bunches of beautiful ribbons, to the admiration of

rural belles, and the envy and jealousy of their beaux and spouses. All acknowledged that he was a brave-looking man, a beautiful elegant man, ay, and a fine-spoken man to boot, as evinced in his numerous harangues to the public; but when he entered a tavern, and invited all to partake of his hospitality, there were no bounds to rustic enthusiasm, and all joined uproariously in the burthen of his well-known song—

THE RECRUITING SERGEANT.

I.

"Come, take these ribbons, then," said he,
 "And give me no denial:
 You may rise to the rank of a great grandee,
 Or a prince of the blood royal;*
 And have an empress for your wife,
 With a coach and six, and a very merry life!"

Chorus.—Huzza! huzza! huzza!

II.

"A wooden leg, or a golden chain,
 Is the maxim of the brave;
 And if you are king of France and Spain,
 What more would you wish to have?
 Unless for India you'd like to pull,
 And there you may be the Great Mogul!"

Chorus.—Huzza! huzza! huzza!

In short, nothing could exceed the popularity of Sergeant Flaherty, especially amongst the fair sex; and though he picked up more recruits than all his predecessors put together, he might have carried off a wife for every one of them, if the regulations had allowed him to beat up for petticoats.

It could not be expected that so fascinating a man should be free from enemies; for, as the poet truly sings, "Envy doth merit as its shade pursue," and some snarling critic is always at hand to tarnish the fairest fame. Some of this class contented themselves with shrugs and shakes of the head, as the safest mode of expressing their sentiments and opinions: others hinted that "talk's cheap, and that 'many a bowld word comes off a weak stomach.' The sergeant, no doubt, spoke very slightly of battle, murder, and sudden death, which the prayer-book taught all sober people to look upon with becoming reverence; but, for all that, when the hour of trial came, he might not be a whit better than other men who held their tongues and minded their own affairs." Of this a proof was very soon afforded.

One market-day, when the main street of Tipperary was more than usually crowded, and the recruiting party was parading up and down, with ribbons flying, and drums and fifes playing "Rory O'More," the most inspiring quick-step that ever was composed;

* This is not so purely imaginative as may, at first sight, appear; for by a recent decree of the emperor of Austria, that soldier of fortune, Radetzky, has been (very properly, we think) created a prince of the blood.—Ed.

while hundreds, I may say thousands, of the admiring rabblement surrounded and accompanied their glorious march, Sergeant O'Flaherty (for he had recently tagged the great O to his otherwise vulgar patronymic), thinking it a good opportunity to display his eloquence, gracefully waved his flashing sword, and cried out with stentorian lungs: "Recruiting party, halt!" Then, hemming significantly thrice to clear his manly voice, he was about to address the smiling multitudes of males and females who crowded around him, with his customary eloquence.

Suddenly a terrific shout arose at the top of the main street, which increased rapidly in volume, intermingled with shrieks and yells of terror; till at length the words "Mad bull! mad bull!" were distinguished in the gathering tumult. All fled in horror and confusion; men, women, and children, tumbling headlong over each other, in their heedless hurry to escape the fury of the savage monster; soldiers, drummers, fifers, all, in short, fled, except the bold O'Flaherty, who, to the general amazement, stood there alone in his glory.

The bull, raging mad with the noise and confusion he himself had caused, was now seen tearing down the street, goring some, and tossing others head over heels on the rough pavement; till the tall motionless figure of the recruiting-sergeant met his sight, glowing in all the colours of the rainbow.

With a bellow of intense and concentrated rage, he made directly at him, while hundreds of pitying voices cried out: "Run, sergeant! Run, for the love of God, and save yourself!"

Firm as a rock, however, stood the bold O'Flaherty, as if determined to take the bull by the horns, literally, and in downright earnest; while the crowd, forgetting their own terror, gazed in stupid wonder at the inevitable destruction of their universal favourite.

My uncle, however, had witnessed a few bull-fights, while he was a prisoner of war in Spain (for he was captured in Whitelock's unhappy expedition to Buenos Ayres), and had seen with delight the perfect *sang froid* with which the *matador* awaits the onset of the savage monster, and the dexterity with which he gives him the *coup de grâce*. With equal coolness he now stood erect, alert, and ready for action.

Just as the bull, with a furious bound and a savage bellow, lowered his head to toss him in the air, O'Flaherty stepped aside; and, as the animal passed him in headlong haste, he seized him by the tail with his left hand, holding on firmly, in spite of the violent lunges of his enraged enemy; then, with two rapid and well-directed blows of his sabre, he cut the tendons of both hind legs; and the ham-strung animal, in a vain attempt to rush forward, fell helpless and exhausted upon the pavement, while a shout of joy and triumph rang through the air from the astonished and delighted multitude.

Before the close of that eventful day, fifty young fellows, in the ardour of their enthusiasm, took the king's shilling from Sergeant O'Flaherty; and I made a secret but a solemn vow that I would never adopt any other profession than that of my gallant uncle.

CHAPTER III.

THE GAGE D'AMOUR.

FOR a long time the whole country rang with the exploit of the brave O'Flaherty: he was deified by the mob, courted by the middle-classes, and even visited by the gentry, and feasted at their houses; being himself of gentle blood, though a wild scion of an ancient race. It was actually proposed to get up a subscription to purchase him an ensigney; but he disdained the idea of acquiring the silver epaulette through the medium of filthy lucre, exclaiming that "he'd win it on the breach, or not at all." For my part, I became wild to "follow to the field," so renowned a leader; and day and night worried my poor brains to accomplish this first and only wish of my heart.

Fortune at length, whether for good or evil, seemed disposed to favour my juvenile aspirations; and an opportunity was afforded me, when I least expected it, of escaping from the loathed drudgery of civil life. My brother, who was in business, and evidently on the high road to fortune, having occasion to go to London, offered to take me with him, and procure me a commission; while I was so delighted with the idea, that I never gave my father a moment's peace till he consented to let me go—with the proviso, however, that I should limit my ambition to the militia; and thus, as the phrase is, he abandoned the last prop of his declining age, to gratify my boyish propensity.

Behold me, then, scarcely in my fifteenth year, about to launch on the great unknown world, in a profession the difficulties of which I had no possible means of ascertaining, and whose splendour alone occupied my thoughts. Great, indeed, was the envy of my school-fellows at the fame and fortune that awaited me, in that ever-glorious career which first enlists the sympathies of the youthful heart; and greater still was their admiration at the pictures I drew from reading and imagination, alas! how unlike the reality of a soldier's life. I became to them an object of intense interest; many vowed they would embrace no other profession than the military, while several made me promise to correspond with them, and give them a regular account of all the battles, sieges, and single combats in which I might be engaged. Thrice happy age! when the banquet of life is enjoyed in advance, and the writing on the wall is lost in the splendour of imagination and the dreams of a heated fancy!

I shall never forget the day I rode out of Tipperary on this my first start in life, at a period when other boys were immersed in the drudgery of school, and possessing no other knowledge of the world than what I had gleaned from books of imagination; which, like the flimsy novels of our penny periodicals, contained anything but faithful pictures of real life and manners. My brother had preceded me

to Clonmel, about twenty miles distant, where he had some business to transact, and where I was to join him. For this purpose, I was mounted on a large, powerful horse, which, though I had frequently ridden him after the stag-hounds, was big enough for a general's charger. My holsters contained a very tidy brace of brass-barrelled pistols, the last gift of my poor father, and my clothes were packed in a large valise fixed upon the crupper; on the top of which was also strapped an old silver-hilted sword, of formidable length, which had decorated my father's thigh at the battle of Minden. This deadly weapon, protruding at either end far beyond the dimensions of the valise, seemed to indicate that its owner was a sort of person that was never to be taken alive.

Having bade my parents a last farewell, very affecting on their part, and very light-hearted on mine, I rode, thus accoutred, through the main street of Tipperary, accompanied by my most attached playfellows, to the admiration and amusement of the townsfolk. Some of these affected to be frightened at my martial aspect, some offered me friendly advice and scraps of proverbial wisdom for my future guidance, while others laughed heartily at my curious equipage, and one graceless varlet exclaimed:

"I'll roast on my finger all that you'll kill in the wars."

Too happy, however, in my own thoughts to regard their idle bantering, I proceeded onward at an easy pace, till I finally bade adieu to my school-companions, with renewed protestations and promises of mutual correspondence.

But my greatest trial was yet to come. Amongst my young relatives, I had a little cousin, Honoria Blake, a child of extraordinary sensibility and intellect; who, though several years younger than myself, had formed such a singular attachment to me that she could scarcely be said to exist out of my presence. She was singularly precocious, and had contracted at a very early age such a fondness for reading, that a book was in reality the only rival I had in her affections, though even that always yielded to my superior claims.

My great delight was in ministering to this early passion of my little cousin for literature, and all my pocket-money went in purchasing food for its gratification. To this, and the facility with which I invented fairy tales for her amusement, may be attributed, I suppose, her excessive partiality for me; but, whatever may have been the cause, the poor little soul was never happy unless walking, running, or riding her little pony by the side of her cousin Percy; or lying in his arms, while he recounted to her the marvellous legends of Fion McCoul, Mouldewarp, and the Headless Coach.

The trial I had now to undergo was the parting with this dear little cousin of mine. Gladly would I have avoided the scene altogether, but it was impossible to evade her vigilance. Ever since she had heard of my expected departure, she had never ceased weeping. Like Niobe, all tears, she hung upon my footsteps, followed me like my shadow, and on the morning of my departure, was up at daybreak, planted herself at her parlour window, which I must necessarily pass, and for whole hours kept watch and ward for

her cousin Percy, who was going to the wars to be killed by the naughty Frenchmen.

But I must spare the gentle reader the misery I myself experienced in this harrowing interview. Poor little Honoria absolutely wept herself into convulsions, which threw us all into a terrible fright, and nothing could pacify her but my solemn promise to return from the wars in a week, and not to allow myself to be killed by any naughty Frenchman whatever. She then clasped upon my left wrist a bracelet of her own hair, which she had woven for the occasion, our united cipher being engraved upon the gold clasp. She exacted from me a vow that this *gage d'amour* should never be lost, stolen, or given away; and, singular to relate, this gift of a child, only six or seven years old, was so sacred in my eyes, that in all my vicissitudes by sea or land, it never left the spot on which she had placed it.

To the dreadful renewal of her sorrow, I at length tore myself away from my poor little cousin, and setting spurs to my horse, I galloped off to Clonmel, where my brother and I took the coach for Dublin, and proceeded to London, *viâ* Holyhead, every inch of the way producing to my enraptured eyes fresh objects of wonder and delight.

Yes! let the world-weary traveller boast of the miracles of art and nature he has seen; let him discourse eloquently to admiring auditors of the various lands he has traversed, and the many strange sights and startling events with which his memory is fraught, I very much question if the enjoyment he finds in descanting for the hundredth time on "the Alps, the Apennines, and river Po," can at all equal the ecstasy with which the unsophisticated mind of youth sees the veil of ignorance and inexperience first rent asunder, and the world, in all its wonders, opening in endless succession to his enraptured vision.

At length we reached the "never-ending, still-beginning" metropolis; and were hurried, as night fell, through innumerable streets, where the lights of shops and street-lamps flashed incessantly into the windows of our stage-coach; while the interminable crowds hurrying on, as it were, for life and death, in opposing tides, and the steady and incessant roar of the "Great Babel," more than realized the image I had formed in my own mind of Pandemonium. At length we were driven under a gloomy and narrow gateway, into a still more gloomy court-yard, when the carriage suddenly stopped, the door was opened, the step let down, and two or three smart-looking waiters, with napkins tucked under their arms, ushered us into that well-known hostelry of ancient times, "The Bull and Mouth."

After an early breakfast the following morning, I quitted this singular old dungeon of an hotel, so fearfully enveloped amidst narrow lanes and lofty buildings that I verily believe the sun had never once fairly shone upon it, and fought my way manfully through the crowded and bustling streets to the Park. But I shall never forget the delight I experienced when the glories of the Horse Guards burst upon my view, and Life Guards and Foot Guards, in

their dazzling panoply, were passing and repassing before my eyes, with all the admirable precision of military movements; while the towers of Westminster Abbey rose majestically above the surrounding foliage, and the joy-bells poured forth a glorious peal in honour of Vimaira, the first of our immortal series of Peninsular triumphs.

Then, indeed, did my bosom swell with military ardour; and so unreasonable did it appear that my father should object to my choice of the army as a profession, that I actually wondered how any human being could ever think of any other. Apprehending, now, that all the battles would be won before I had time even to buckle on my armour, I urged my brother not to lose a moment in preparing me for the field; and he, smiling at my boyish enthusiasm, accordingly addressed himself to this high emprise. Nor did he experience much difficulty in the matter. Through the influence of the member for our county, who reckoned on a *quid pro quo* from my father at the next general election, I was appointed to an ensigncy in the Hereford Militia, and lost no time, when my outfit was completed, in starting for Chelmsford, the head-quarters of the regiment.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREATENING LETTER.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when I arrived at Chelmsford; and having somewhat arranged my outward man after my journey, at the inn where the coach stopped I inquired my way to the barracks.

On entering the gateway, the smart slap of the sentry on the butt of his musket, as he carried arms to a young officer who was entering at the same moment, attracted my attention to the latter, and I begged he would be kind enough to direct me to the quarters of Sir George Cornwall, the commanding officer. He very politely offered to conduct me thither, and we accordingly walked across the barrack-yard, where several squads of recruits and defaulters were at drill; two or three horses in body-clothes being trotted about by a groom in livery, and some buglers and drum-boys practising the roll-call and tattoo on their respective instruments.

We found Sir George amusing himself in his barrack-room with his violoncello, which he played remarkably well. He was a tall, elegant-looking man, with a pleasing aristocratic countenance, but very deaf. He received me most graciously; and after chatting a few moments, consigned me to the care of my conductor, Lieutenant Richardson, to show me the lions, and assist me in my barrack arrangements.

This task Richardson undertook *con amore*, being a lively, good-natured fellow in the main, with some crotchets of his own, however, which showed themselves on further acquaintance. He introduced

me to the quartermaster, who immediately furnished me with a barrack-room, and to the adjutant, who supplied me with a servant. We then proceeded to the mess-room, where I was introduced to several other young fellows, with whom I lunched, and we were speedily on the best possible terms with each other. My *fidus Achates* next accompanied me into town, where he introduced me to Solomon Levi, from whom I purchased some barrack furniture; to the billiard-room, where we had a rubber or two; and to some pretty milliners, with whom we flirted till the first bugle warned us to dress for dinner.

It was a day to be remembered amongst the *res gestæ* of the Blakes, when I first donned my regimentals with apple-green facings, Herefordshire being proverbially the "Land of Cider." On this great occasion, my servant, Tom King, was materially assisted in his multifarious duties of valet by my friend Richardson, who really seemed to take a pride in his new *protégé*, for it was his great hobby to chaperon and patronize all recent arrivals, by inducting them into all the vices and follies of military life, till he either got tired of them, or they of him. Accordingly, after some learned discussions between my two assistants, as to the exact quantity of pomatum and powder, the regulated length of my false queue, and the tying of my sash before, or behind, I was at length turned out, it was admitted on all hands, a most unexceptionable recruit.

The mess-room was crowded, as we entered, with the officers of the regiment and several civilians, as guests of the day; and I was presented, in succession, to every one of any consequence, being received by all with the utmost kindness and urbanity. Our regiment was highly aristocratic: Sir George Cornwall was an old baronet; the Honourable Thomas Foley was our lieutenant-colonel; Lord Rodney captain of the light company, and his brother, the Honourable (and truly amiable) Thomas Harley, captain of grenadiers, besides several other off-shoots of noble houses. The mess was richly furnished with plate; we ate off china; and champagne, at that time a luxury confined to certain classes, encouraged the "feast of reason and the flow of soul," on "stranger days" especially, such as the present; while an excellent band alternately played opera airs and overtures, or sang madrigals, glees, and catches in full chorus for our entertainment.

Nothing could be more delightful than this my *coup d'essai* in my new career, and pleasant dreams that night, in my comfortable camp bed, seemed to augur a happy future. In the morning, Tom King lit my fire, made my breakfast, prepared my clothes for dressing, and called me just ten minutes before the first bugle had sounded for parade. Everything, in short, was done with the most perfect regularity and precision, and I had little or no occasion to exercise any thought myself; my wants being all supplied and my wishes anticipated as if I had been some favoured prince in fairy-land.

On parade, I underwent a more critical scrutiny, with reference, at least, to personal appearance, than on the previous evening; and I was happy to find that the tacit verdict was favourable; for, on being

posted to a battalion company, Lord Rodney applied to have me in the Light Bobs, and his wishes being acceded to, I was directed to supply myself forthwith with wings and a sabre and sling-belt, in lieu of the epaulette, frog-belt, and straight sword with which I had joined. The good-natured reader will, I hope, excuse me for dwelling on such trifles as these; but they were my halcyon days, an *oasis* in the broad desert of my chequered existence.

I spent that evening at a barrack *soirée*, given by our major's lady; and though we were somewhat restricted for room, we were not the less happy. Several of the Chelmsford belles being amongst the company, the card-tables were voted a bore, and consigned to the passage; a carpet-dance was improvised, our hostess sat down to the piano, I occasionally assisted her with the violin, while "Sir Roger de Coverley" and the *Boulanger*, those venerable relics of the olden time, were danced with grace and spirit, in spite of the intervening obstacles of tables, chairs, sofas, and book-shelves.

This was all, in turf parlance, *going upon velvet*; but the reader is not, therefore, to infer that I met with no checks in my career, to remind me of the common lot of humanity. Though still comparatively happy, I soon began to find I was not exempt from these; for, as my old favourite Hudibras so pathetically sings,—

"Ay, me! what perils do environ
The man that meddles with cold iron!
What plaguy mischiefs and mishaps
Do dog him still with after-claps!"

In the first place, I was handed over to the drill-sergeant, who put me through the goose-step and firelock drill, with the most stern and unbending rigour; and as these diabolical evolutions were all performed in public, I had the gratification of seeing drum-boys and camp-colour men constantly sneering at my awkwardness; while occasionally a pretty girl would pass the barrack-gate, when I was in the crisis of a "right-go!" in the goose-step, with one leg stuck out behind in a most ungraceful angle of incidence with the remainder of my body.

To the drill-sergeant succeeded the adjutant, with company and skeleton-drill, while the major stood by, picking holes in my jacket for losing my distance, or directing me to hold up my head and throw back my shoulders; he himself being the most clumsy and misshapen mass of flesh that could be imagined. On one occasion, this functionary hurt my *amour propre* in a manner that I can never forget or forgive.

It was our Sunday evening parade, and all the belles and beaux of Chelmsford were walking up and down the barrack-yard, listening to our beautiful band. I had, it seems, ventured to deviate from the ordinary routine in some trifling matter of parade etiquette, when this "bustling botherby" of a major, desirous of showing the world that he had something to do for his money, rode furiously up to me, and demanded my reason for so heretical a deviation from the Law and the Prophets. I very innocently replied that I *thought* my

manner of performing the duty in question was an improvement on the old method.

"You *thought*, sir!" cried the major, foaming at the mouth. "How dare you *think*, sir? never let me hear of your *thinking* again, sir!"

The reader may judge of my confusion, mortification and wrath, when I saw Miss Julia Densham, a rich heiress, with whom I had lately fallen in love, show her beautiful teeth in a most unequivocal smile, which I thought anything but *comme il faut*, under the circumstances. In the agony of the moment I made a mental vow never again to think upon any subject whatever connected with my military duties; and, after mature experience, I now recommend this, as a very safe rule to begin with, to the junior branches of the army, especially those military tyros who are familiarly denominated "Five-and-threepenny targets."

But all these rebuffs, serious as I then thought them, were "trifles light as air" to the next "untoward event," to which I was very nearly falling a victim.

Having taken offence at my commanding officer for supplanting me, one evening, at a ball, in the honour of dancing with Miss Julia Densham, the heiress upon whom, as I before said, I had last fixed my somewhat erratic affections, I took up my pen, determined to chastise him for his presumption, and wrote him a letter of three foolscap pages, of a most inflammatory and "aggravating" description. In this I larded the leanness of my own composition by copious quotations from Lindley Murray and Tooke's "Pantheon," all tending to liken him to one of those powerful and ruthless tyrants who, in the olden time, took a pleasure in baffling the wishes and blighting the happiness of sighing Strephons and of ladies fair.

The consequence of this precocious and pugnacious proceeding was, that I found myself, one fine morning, in close arrest; a sentry was placed at my door, and old Rivet, the adjutant, having marched off with my sword, soon after marched back with a list of charges to be preferred against me, as long as my arm. Sir George had doubtless laughed at my boyish folly, for I had actually only completed my fifteenth year, but thought it necessary to give me at least a salutary fright on the occasion.

In the pride of composition, and to give due force to my philippic, I had witten it in a very antithetical style, which has since been adopted by the erudite author of "Lacon;" so that it was, in fact, nothing more nor less than a string of about twenty epigrams put together as chance directed.

My own style was now retorted on me; every epigram produced a separate charge, and every charge began with the awful preamble, "for conduct unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman, and highly subversive of military discipline." Every paragraph of my unfortunate epistle was ingeniously discovered to be an infraction of some specific article of war; in short, the whole Mutiny Act seemed to have been devised and invented solely to preclude the possibility of my becoming commander-in-chief, or marrying an heiress.

I leave my readers to judge of the consternation I was in at the formidable array of pains and penalties I had so inadvertently incurred, for I had never anticipated a legal proceeding on the part of Sir George, who was certainly bound by all the laws of honour to settle the affair in a gentlemanly manner, with coffee and pistols. As the case stood, however, shooting and quartering was the most merciful sentence I could possibly expect; and the idea of quitting this best of all possible worlds, when I was only, as it were, on the very threshold, put me into a most horrible fright. My hair, it is true, did not turn grey, at least perceptibly, owing to the quantity of powder I wore; but I'll venture to say that, were it not for the stringent mass of pomatum which was then *de rigueur*, it would have stood on end, "like quills upon the fretful porcupine," even to the very extremity of my false queue.

Old Rivet, the adjutant, whose heart was as hard as the nether millstone, and unfeeling as the halbert from which he had just been promoted, "grinned horribly a ghastly smile" at the impression he had made, and duly reported my fallen estate to my powerful oppressor. This fell tyrant, as I deemed him, had the cruelty to leave me in an agony of suspense for a whole week; during which I was quizzed to death by my brother-officers, and confined to my barrack-room, which seemed worse than Trenck's dungeon, or Dante's "Inferno," "where hope never comes." Talk of the Black Hole of Calcutta! it was a breezy mountain-top compared to my den; for though door and window were thrown open, the grim aspect of the sentinel at my threshold, and the wicked leering of the drummer-boys as they passed, made my heart swell like a mountain in my breast; till, at length, I actually felt as if the atmospheric air had been totally exhausted by an air-pump, as I had recently seen done to a poor frog in an experiment, and that the elastic fluids contained in the finer vessels of my agonized frame were every instant on the point of explosion.

When the vengeance of my ruthless foe was at length fully satiated, I was allowed to sing my Palinodia; and, at a full mess-meeting, I had the gratification of swallowing my confounded epistle, paragraph by paragraph; every gulp being accompanied by a suitable reprimand and admonition from my triumphant rival, who, soon after, to cap the climax of my defeat, had the additional pleasure of marrying the heiress who had been the innocent cause of my disgrace.

CHAPTER V.

BARRACK SCENES.

THE sufferings occasioned by this "heavy blow and great discouragement" of my first attempt at literary composition, wrung from me, in the bitterness of my soul, a vow never to be guilty of a similar transgression; and so violent was the shock my nervous system underwent

on the occasion, that for many months after I never committed myself to paper in any more elaborate production than a guard-report or an innocent love-letter—I say innocent, for as yet all my effusions in this way were of the high-heroic cast, and but little calculated to do any mischief, even to the most tender-hearted innamorata.

But I shall not trouble the reader with all the absurdities I committed before contact with the world had somewhat licked me into shape; for it was now but too apparent that I had rushed into a superior phase of existence, with all the ignorance and conceit of those precocious boys embalmed in Punch's immortal page. One practical joke, however, I must not omit, which was played off against me at this time, and which was not altogether devoid of salutary consequences.

I had taken such a disgust to my barrack-room, from my recent confinement, that I went to reside for a time in lodgings; and, as ill-luck would have it, pitched upon one not far from the barracks, which was kept by a buxom little grass widow, whose husband had recently left her, and who was therefore compelled, as a *pis aller*, to take in single gentlemen, and do for them.

I take Heaven to witness, that my thoughts were most particularly innocent when I entered upon the establishment of Mrs. Dawkins; for the idea of trespassing on the domain of another never once tarnished my imagination. My brother officers, however, who were constantly dropping in upon me, to have a chat with my hostess, either were or affected to be of a different opinion; and were constantly rallying me on my good taste, on the tact with which I could choose a quarter, on the tidy manner in which my *ménage* was conducted, and a variety of other topics of a similar tendency. I must, however, admit that my little grass widow gave some colour to these insinuations, by unguardedly praising to my wild companions the gentleness of my manners and the beautiful style in which I played the flute.

All this came in due time to the ears of our lieutenant-colonel, the Hon. Thomas Foley, who, not to speak irreverently of the aristocracy, was the most perfect devil I ever met with; that is to say, though a high-principled, talented, and well-educated man, he drank more wine than a dozen, without being tipsy; he was a desperate, but most honourable gambler, and he talked in his cups more horrible stuff than ever was uttered at a "boozing-ken" in St. Giles's. He was, however, a general favourite, who loved to play the boy as well as any of us; and such was the singularly juvenile cast and expression of his features, that, when surrounded, as he generally was, by a host of young fellows, he might very well be taken for an overgrown junior ensign.

This eccentric scion of nobility thought it was an opportunity not to be overlooked, to have a little fun at my expense; for he had taken a fancy to me, and loved to get me into scrapes, for the pleasure of getting me out of them. He led me into a duel once, and was my friend on the occasion, when my adversary and I fired seven shots each, without hitting, though at ten paces. The considerate Foley then declared that enough had been done for honour, and insisted on

our shaking hands, which we accordingly did. The sagacious reader will, doubtless, understand that the seconds, in loading, had left out the bullets; a fact of which all parties were cognizant but myself.

In this present scheme against my happiness, Colonel Foley found a ready assistant in our paymaster, Davis, who had originally been an attorney at Leominster, and who, in the hope of one day or other representing that snug borough in Parliament, was always delighted to be the agent of a little safe devilry to gratify men who had paramount interest therein. This cunning accountant prepared the scenery and machinery of the drama, and by his legal knowledge effectually completed my mystification.

Accordingly, one evening when Colonel Foley, Davis, two or three others, and myself had outsat the moderates, and were just commencing on our fourth whip—by the way, it may be necessary to explain the meaning of this term. Know then, gentle reader, that, on ordinary days, when no strangers were present, and the usual mess allowance of a pint of wine each had been discussed, of which due notice was always given by signal from the vice-president, a second would, perhaps, be placed upon the table, and those only who chose to partake of it would remain. After this an empty wine glass was sent round, and those who wished to sit longer put in a shilling each for an additional allowance. This was called “whipping;” the mess-waiter took the money, fresh bottles were placed upon the table, and the company closed up to the president, to enjoy a still more social chat till bed-time.

This was the position in which we were on the present occasion: the generous juice had made me eloquent, and I was discoursing very largely on the ordinary topics of women, war, and wine, when the mess-room door opened, and in walked two very suspicious-looking fellows, muffled up in wrap-rascals, with each a huge bludgeon in his hand. They made directly up to me, and each tapping me on a shoulder, as if “to make assurance doubly sure,” one of them handed me a partly printed, partly written paper, and said:—

“Ensign Blake, I arrests you in the king’s name, and in wartue of this here latitat.”

I mechanically took the paper, the awful title of which gave me a considerable shock, though I was by no means clear as to its signification. It might be a mittimus to Newgate for robbery, or a state-warrant to the Tower for high treason; but which of these two delinquencies I had been guilty of I could not at the moment tell: in my perplexity I kept gazing, with mouth wide open, on the intruders and on my brother officers alternately, but I could not utter a word to save my life.

At length Colonel Foley very kindly interfered in my behalf, and sternly rebuked the men for daring to intrude on the mess-room of his Majesty’s troops: but they very stiffly said they knew what they were about; they had the law on their side, and they never cared nothing, not they, for nobody’s big looks.

“Let us hear, then, what it’s all about,” said the colonel.

“Had you not better read the latitat?” suggested Davis.

"Good gracious!" said the colonel, perusing it, and mumbling to himself, "distrain ye the goods and chattels—criminal conversation—Dorothy Dawkins, &c. &c., that is altogether beyond my interference. I was in hopes it was only a simple caption for a paltry debt or so, instead of an action by Jeremiah Dawkins."

"Very serious, sir," said Davis, shaking his head and sipping his wine. "*Banco regis*, a very serious matter indeed."

"Unlawful communication," said the colonel, "with a *femme couverte*."

"Destitution of marital rights and comforts," chimed in Davis.

"Damages laid at five thousand pounds," said the colonel.

"But, my dear colonel," I at length gasped out, "my dear Davis, I know no more about Dorothy Dawkins than you do."

"Pray, sir," said the colonel, drawing himself up with great *hauteur*, "don't attempt to implicate me in so disgraceful a transaction."

"For my part," said Davis, "I wash my hands of the shocking affair altogether."

"My dear Richardson, my dear Jenkins," I said, appealing to the others.

"It's a very ugly business," said Richardson; "that I must say, though you are my friend."

"Hang me," said Jenkins, "if I'd stand in your shoes for a trifle."

"My good fellows," I exclaimed, turning round to the bailiffs,

"I'm perfectly innocent, 'pon my honour."

"Gammon!" said one, putting his tongue in his cheek.

"You look like it," said the other, with a diabolical leer.

"I take Heaven to witness," I exclaimed, casting up my hands and eyes devoutly to the ceiling, "that Dorothy Dawkins may be a vestal virgin for anything I know to the contrary."

"Oh, oh, oh!" cried some. "Shame! shame!" cried others.

"But where on earth," I exclaimed, with a look of profound despair; "where am I to get five thousand pounds?"

"There's the Kilkenny estate, you know," said the colonel, "of which you talked so much this evening."

"'Tis gone long ago," I replied, "with that humbugging James the Second."

"And that beautiful piece of bog land on *Slieve na Muck*," observed Davis.

"It's mortgaged," I said, "for more than it's worth."

"Come, come," said the principal bailiff, "we can't wait here no longer, not for nobody. So put on your hat and go along with us; we have a po-chay at the door, quite handy."

"But my good fellows, I'm innocent," I exclaimed.

"You can tell that to the judges, or the marines, if you like," said the tipstaff; "but in the meanwhile you must go to quod."

I threw another imploring glance upon the colonel, upon Davis, upon Richardson, upon Jenkins; but they all sat like so many statues, with their eyes fixed upon the ceiling, and I saw that the case was hopeless.

"Confound the fellow!" I said, "why doesn't Jeremiah Dawkins call me out, and vindicate his injured honour like a man?"

"There, gentlemen," said the bailiff, "I call you all to witness, he has confessed his guilt."

"I have done no such thing," I cried.

"Yes you did," said the bailiff's assistant; you said as how you injured the poor man's honour."

"Oh, oh! Shame, shame!" exclaimed my brother officers, *unà voce*.

"I said nothing of the kind," I cried, tears of shame and indignation starting from my eyes; "but if he fancies I have injured his honour, I'll give him satisfaction this instant; and I'll give him three shots to one, rather than go to your infernal *banco regis*."

"We have nothing to do with that," said the bailiff doggedly. "Our orders is to seize your corpus, and go with us you must."

With a heavy heart, I accordingly prepared to accompany the myrmidons of the law; and we had actually reached the door, when the colonel called out in a voice evidently stifled with deep emotion:

"Stop for a moment."

The bailiffs accordingly stopped, and came to where the colonel was sitting.

"After all," said Foley, when he had somewhat recovered himself, "this is a bailable offence, even supposing it to have been committed."

"It never was committed, my dear colonel," I exclaimed, "I pledge you my word of honour."

"Pray," resumed the colonel, "what amount of security do you require for Mr. Blake's appearance when called upon to answer the charge in the Court of King's Bench?"

"We cannot take a farthing less, your worship," said the bailiff. "than the full amount of the damages laid."

"'Tis a heavy sum to be bound in," said the colonel with a deep sigh; "but rather than see my friend in jail, I'll risk it, though 'tis every fraction of ready I have in the world."

I threw myself into the arms of the generous Foley, and vowed eternal gratitude for his goodness.

"Davis," said the colonel, "be good enough to go and draw up the bail-bonds, and I'll sign them at once, before the affair gets wind."

The paymaster accordingly withdrew with his worthy instruments, and, to my great comfort, I saw no more of them. I sat down, of course, to another bottle with my generous deliverer; to whom, in the overflowings of my heart, I made an ample confession of all my peccadilloes.

I was assisted home about the small hours by Tom King, who put me to bed; and the next morning I awoke with a splitting headache and a misty consciousness of something like a frightful nightmare.

CHAPTER VI.

NORMAN CROSS.

IN a few days the roguery oozed out; and, as Dr. Prolix would say, it caused a great laugh at the time. I had my revenge, however, at a subsequent period, at least on the paymaster, for his accomplice was too good a fellow to bear malice against; but for a long time after I was never called anything but Dorothy Dawkins.

This custom of giving nick-names, by the bye, prevailed very much amongst us young fellows at that time, as indeed it may to this day for anything I know to the contrary. One of my brother subalterns, who walked in a strange sidelong manner, we always called Right-shoulders-forward; another who, with his hands in his pockets, made an incessant jerking motion with his elbows, we called Shuffle-the-wind; a third, a tall, lanky fellow, with a receding forehead and a wide mouth always open, and uttering turkey-like sounds, we called Hobble-gobbleum; and a fourth, who was certainly more like a pioneer than a gentleman, we nicknamed Shoulder-your-shovel. Our quarter-master was a remarkably stiff skeleton figure and had several deep blue marks on his face, from the explosion of a cartridge when he was in the ranks: we called him Starch-and-blue; and the *sobriquet* derived considerable piquancy from the fact that his wife had been a washerwoman; while our adjutant never went by any other name than that of Mind-to-move-forward! this being the very mystical caution with which he invariably prefaced the word "march!" We were so much in the habit of calling our drill-sergeant Marshal Saxe, that it rather mystified a young fellow who had recently joined, and who in all seriousness begged the colonel one day on parade, to exempt him from further drill, as he had been told he was quite perfect.

"Who told you so?" asked the colonel, incredulously.

"Marshal Saxe, sir," replied Johnny Newcome, amidst a general roar of laughter.

But these are boyish recollections, unworthy of this scientific and utilitarian age, when the youth of Great Britain, though still in their teens, are deep in the mysteries of steamships, railroads, and money questions; working to a thread-paper their organ of acquisitiveness, and deigning to converse, in their convivial moments, about nothing but nuggets, cast iron, and gold dust. Yes, boyish recollections they doubtless are, but I can never forget that they refer to those beardless youths who smote the hairy warriors of Gaul, and broke their golden idol with the feet of clay—those laughing, tender offspring of fond mothers, who bore with unflinching spirit the march, the bivouac, and the battle-field; and whose blood, freely and fearlessly shed on many a distant soil, has preserved to "merrie England" her happy homes and altars free, her maids and matrons

unscared by the rude glance of foreign soldiery, and her countless treasures safe from the greedy grasp of continental despots.

The first few months of my novitiate passed thus pleasantly at Chelmsford, in the performance of easy duties, and the society of my brother officers, and the wives of the few who were married: for we had but little intercourse with the surrounding gentry, who, generally speaking, kept aloof from us birds of passage with the cold formality peculiar to the English character. This was a circumstance that struck me with amazement, accustomed as I had been from my earliest years to see the military courted and caressed in my own country, and treated with that unbounded hospitality for which it was so remarkable in its days of comparative prosperity; for there, alas! prosperity is a comparative, not a positive good.

Much of this precious period was, I shame to confess it, squandered in idle pleasures and trivial amusements; but our youth is spent in killing time, and our age in repenting of the murder. Amongst these, the billiard-room had its usual attractions; and there I was fleeced by my friend Richardson and others, till at length I myself became an adept, and might have fleeced tyros in turn, which I am happy to say I never did. I loved the game for its own sake, as one essentially military in its character, being highly suggestive of thought, combination, and enterprise; but when it was debased to a mere money-grubbing speculation it lost its noble impulse in my eyes, and its fascination greatly diminished, though it still made deep inroads on my time.

Fortunately, however, from my earliest recollection, I have been under the influence of three great passions, or hobbies, call them which you will—viz., books, music, and painting; and I cannot recommend to young military men three safer or more agreeable companions. My absolute devotion to these amusements, for I dare not call them studies, saved me from becoming a mere vapid idler; and I can safely say that the long hours I passed in my own barrack-room during the winter evenings, when others were at the bottle or the billiard-room, were at once the most delightful and instructive of my otherwise monotonous existence. At first, I was somewhat quizzed and laughed at by my young companions for this solitary indulgence in what they called gammon; but in time I came to be considered a clever sort of fellow, being smart at repartee, fearless in expressing my opinions, and an especial good scribe at a court-martial. I soon became very expert in this way, principally from the idleness of my fellow members, who were always glad to give me a monopoly of this "horrid bore."

By the time I was dismissed from drill, and declared by Marshal Saxe to be a very creditable specimen of a Light Bob, we got the route for Norman Cross. This being a new phase in my existence, I was all in a bustle to prepare for the march; packing and unpacking my trunks, so that, on a sudden emergency, they might not resemble the midshipman's chest, where everything was uppermost, and nothing at hand; and arranging my canteen so as to make the greatest quantity of breakfast and tea equipage fit into the smallest possible

compass. Then I had to get a box made for my camp-bed and bedding, and to have it painted of a deep slate-colour, with my name, rank, and regiment at full length in large white letters on the top. Then I bought a hollow boot-tree, in whose capacious womb my boot-jack, brushes, and blacking were compactly stowed; while for my pistols and gun-case, I had strong canvas covers manufactured, and painted the exact ditto of my bed-box. In all these matters, which served me for a sort of jubilee, I was eminently assisted by my valet in ordinary, Tom King, who was a most handy, experienced, and obliging fellow; though he did possess one or two unpleasant peculiarities, of which hereafter.

But the most disagreeable part of all this was the delivering over of my barrack-room; a ceremony very repugnant to my rooted prejudice against everything that had an air of business, but which I was recommended by some of the old hands to superintend myself, and I soon found out the reason why.

The evening before we marched, in walked the barrackmaster-sergeant, with an ominous aspect, and note-book and pencil in hand, to take an inventory of breakages, deficiencies, and holes in the wall. He was accompanied by our quartermaster-sergeant, who might be looked upon as plenipotentiary for my behoof; though I thought I detected something like collusion and undue fellow-feeling in the course of the proceedings.

These two high functionaries, having first taken a general survey of my establishment, which was, I confess, in an awful state of confusion, looked at each other with a furtive smile, and then proceeded to note down the discrepancies in detail.

"This coal-box," said the barrack-sergeant, "is broken all to smash, with something like shot holes."

"Yes," I said, "last rainy day we set it up as a target for a pistol-match. 'Twasn't bad practice, as you see; I hit the bull's-eye five times running."

"One, two, five, seven, eleven, fifteen, five-and-twenty," said the honest sergeant, as he counted,—"it must have a new bottom altogether."

"Very well," I said; "put that down to me, and go on."

"This table is all rickety," said the sergeant; "and two of the chairs have only three legs between them."

"Well," I said, "charge me with the repairs, for they're very useful in our gymnastics; but make haste, for there goes the first dinner bugle."

This injunction, I thought, had an opposite effect; for the barrack-sergeant began very deliberately to count the holes in the wall where I had nailed up pictures of all sorts and sizes, changing their position every now and then, as whim or fancy dictated.

"As I am a living man," said the sergeant, with a deep inspiration, "there are one hundred and fifty nail-holes in this wall alone."

"Well," I said, "clap 'em all down, and don't bother me any more about them."

"And on the opposite wall," said the sergeant, "are three large frisky paintings, red, yellow, green, and black."

"Those fresco paintings," I said, "as you are pleased to call them, I leave there for the amusement and instruction of the next comer."

"'Twill cost me three shillings in yellow ochre and whitewash," said the sergeant, "to rub them all out."

This was the cavalier manner in which the Vandal treated my artistic lucubrations; which, though very tolerable landscapes, were not, I confess, anything to be compared to some beautiful chalk drawings which I often subsequently admired in a barrack-room at Ipswich, the productions of Sir Robert Kerr Porter, when a captain in the Leicester militia, and which were allowed to remain on the walls as fine specimens of his genius.

"Now, here are three panes of glass cracked," said the sergeant, "and one out altogether."

"I flung my boot through that, an hour ago," I said, "at Hobble-gobbleum, for making faces at me."

"Then," said the sergeant, "the poker is bent like the letter S; the tongs are minus one leg; the fender is crushed down as flat as a pancake, and the bellows has lost its nozzle, and has fifty air-holes in it besides."

It was, in fact, a wheezy and asthmatical old concern, that gave out wind everywhere but where it was wanted.

"And I'm dashed!" said the sergeant, with a fearful oath, "if this fire-shovel isn't burnt down to the size of a mustard-spoon—all along, I dare say, of melting lead to cast bullets with."

"Weil," I replied, "'twas the handiest thing I could find for the purpose."

"And somebody," continued the sergeant, "has been boring a lot of holes in the floor, making ghosts, I suppose, with the red-hot poker."

At this moment the second bugle sounded for dinner; snatching up my forage-cap, for I had some friends at the mess, I ran off, leaving the two sergeants alone in their glory: and under their considerate management, my barrack damages cost me *only* fifty shillings!

N'importe! We're on the road, and hey for change and variety, new scenes, new faces, and fresh adventures; all so delightful to unreflecting youth, yea, and to sober age also, as I myself can testify in this my grand climacteric, when the tap of the drum, or the merry bugle-note, echoing through the woodland, sends the blood in a tumultuous current back to my heart, and I long for the times of old—"the deeds of the days of other years!"

Of all parties of pleasure, give me a march in happy England; not, as it is now too often performed, on the abominable railway, but along the smooth carriage-roads of ancient times; with their toll-bars, their smiling cottages, their way-side inns enveloped in vines, their honey-suckle-hedges, their bordering meadows, and overhanging elms and beeches; amidst which the soldiers tramp along at a steady pace, in column or subdivisions, singing their quaint songs, or laughing with reckless glee at some biting jest or merry story; their officers joggling

on beside them in little groups, indulging in friendly chat, or flirting with the rosy-cheeked maidens whose road may happen to lie in the same direction; while, ever and anon, entering some village or rural town, the ranks close up, stragglers hasten to join their companies, the officers resume their places, arms are sloped, and the band in front striking up some merry quick-step, fatigue and sore feet are forgotten, and every man is a hero, at least in his own unprejudiced mind.

Our marches, which rarely exceeded twenty miles a day, were generally completed before breakfast; though we sometimes breakfasted at some rural hostelry, which was in itself a source of no small amusement, from the bustle and confusion into which all were thrown to provide for so large a party. The remainder of the day we had for rest and amusement; and our excellent mess being established at the principal hotel of our halt, we spent our evenings like gentlemen who devoted their hearts to the fair, and their lives to their king and country. In this manner, we were not long in reaching Norman Cross, that once celebrated military station, whose extensive site is now, doubtless, crowned with waving fields of corn or bristly stubble, as the season may happen to be; though it was then a cantonment, occupied by twelve thousand beings full of life, high hope, and unconquerable spirit.

Of these, upwards of eight thousand were French prisoners, of all ranks, naval and military, horse, foot, and artillery: the rest were their guards; consisting of five or six splendid regiments of militia, of which mine was by no means the least conspicuous for its numerical strength and superior discipline.

This celebrated station covered many acres of ground, the inner portion of which, constituting the prison, was divided into four quadrangles; these were surrounded by high palisades, placed one foot apart, and were separated from each other by broad avenues; the whole being commanded by a lofty wooden building, mounting a dozen four-pounder swivel guns, which was called the block-house, and was situated in the centre, at the intersection of the avenues. The barracks of the garrison formed external quadrangles of vast extent, palisaded also towards the country. They comprised quarters for four thousand men, with large barrack-yards, stables, cooking houses, and other out-offices; the whole establishment being built of wood, tarred and painted, and looking compact and comfortable.

Each of the inner quadrangles was so extensive as to permit the prisoners to amuse themselves by walking, jumping, fencing, and other healthful exercises, during the day; and at night they were all locked up in lofty and well-ventilated apartments, where the only inconvenience they experienced was want of room. From the great increase in their numbers latterly, this inconvenience at length amounted to a positive evil. Their mattresses were laid upon the floor, and when they retired to rest, they were jammed so close together that no individual person could turn from one side to the other, without the concurrence of the whole.

To remedy so great an evil, these ingenious fellows entered into a

treaty offensive and defensive; by virtue of which a timesman was appointed by general consent, whose duty it was, when they had lain for a certain period on one side, to cry out with a loud voice, "*Tournez!*" on which the whole company, by a simultaneous movement, was to make an immediate change of position. This was certainly not very pleasant during the heat of the weather, and it was particularly irksome to those who did not awake at the critical moment of turning; but custom soon reconciled them to it, and they at length became so expert, that frequently the word of command was given, and the change of position made, without a single individual being disturbed from his slumbers by the operation.

With the exception of being thus packed up as close as sprats in a barrel, our prisoners were comfortable enough at Norman Cross; and instead of fretting themselves to fiddlestrings by reflecting on their helpless condition, and vainly attempting to escape, as is the case with Englishmen similarly situated, they endeavoured to banish care by employment. Some of them taught French, dancing, and fencing, while others manufactured a variety of toys from the bones of their meat and the straw of their mattresses, which were eagerly purchased by the visitors of the prison. These were numerous, and comprised all the gentle and simple inhabitants of the country round, the officers of the garrison and their wives and daughters, together with casual travellers, whose curiosity led them to view a place of such celebrity.

With all these the prisoners held constant communication, between the palisades of their respective quadrangles; whither fond mothers went to purchase a spinning-jenny, or a rattle for their noisy darlings; doting fathers to buy an ivory guillotine, or ship model for their hopeful heirs; country Strephons to present their rural belles with a *gage d'amour*, a needle-case in the shape of Cupid's quiver, or a work-box of sandal-wood beautifully ornamented in classical designs with painted straw and bits of looking-glass; while curious travellers flocked thither to pick up a memorial of the strange sights they had seen. All the world, in short, went to see the French prisoners, to profit by their instruction, or to avail themselves of their ingenuity; and, at the time we arrived there, Norman Cross presented less the appearance of a prison than a fair.

Amongst others, I availed myself of the opportunity to renew my French studies, which I prosecuted with much success. I also became a good fencer, and made considerable progress in Spanish, many of the prisoners having served in the first army of occupation sent by Napoleon to the Peninsula. But that which I found of most essential service to me at a subsequent period, was Freemasonry, into the sovereign mysteries of which I was duly inducted in an excellent Lodge held in the garrison. I am somewhat particular in noticing all these points, which I strongly recommend to the consideration and adoption of such aspiring young heroes as may honour this book with a perusal.

At Norman Cross we were close to that great hunting country, Leicestershire; and but a few miles from Whittlesea Mere, whose

sedgy surface I have often ploughed with adventurous punt, while shooting ducks and widgeons. At Peterborough we enjoyed all the amusements of that pretty little city, and danced and flirted with its lovely fair ones; while, within one mile of our barracks lay the village of Stilton, world-renowned for its cheeses; though none of that excellent edible is therein manufactured, being entirely the produce of the neighbouring county of Leicester. Stilton still occupies a verdant spot in my memory's waste, as there for the first time I fell seriously, deeply, and irrevocably in love. But this important epoch of my checkered life is worthy of another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FRENCH PRISONER.

THIS world, after all, is a mere phantasmagoria; or, as Lord Denman said of something else, "a mockery, a delusion, and a snare." When you fancy you are standing upon firm ground, and have all your earthly wishes within your grasp, the quicksand upon which you build your "airy nothings" slides from under your feet, and you are engulfed in a maelstrom of blighted hopes, ardent longings, and anticipated joys.

When or how it was that I first became acquainted with Harriet Sibley I now forget, but she soon became the ruling star of my destiny. She was serious, romantic, and of a high heroic cast of thought; being thus, as it were, a counterpart of myself. Her beauty was not brilliant, but her features were pleasing and expressive, and her figure symmetry itself. Her sister Jane, on the contrary, was very handsome, a pure *blonde*, and gay and lively as the lark while it soars aloft and "at heaven's gate sings" amidst ethereal sunshine.

These two fair sisters used frequently to walk up to Norman Cross, which was situated on a considerable elevation above the village of Stilton, where they dwelt with their widowed mother; and thus I had opportunities enough to advance my suit, which I did with all the ardour of a boy of sixteen, but without any of the dexterity that most speedily wins the favour of the fair. I was, however, the chosen beau and *preux chevalier* of *la belle Harriette*, as she was denominated by the French prisoners; and though many of my brother officers tried to cut me out, by all those means which are proverbially fair in love and war, she still manifested a decided preference for me, which was repaid on my part by the most delicate attentions and devoted attachment; but I never once ventured to ask either her or myself how it was all to terminate.

I remarked that in their progress with other company through the avenues of the prison, these dear sisters generally stopped for some time at one particular stall; for the prisoners were permitted to fix up narrow boards, or counters, on the outside of their palings, upon

which they exposed their toys of bones and straw for sale. This I at first imagined was for the purpose of making purchases; but I soon found there was something else on the *tapis*, and that a certain young Frenchman always gave them the *rendezvous* at that identical spot, though apparently, poor fellow, he had nothing either to buy or sell.

He was a handsome, soldier-like fellow, with a very threadbare frock coat, a smart moustache, and a gold-laced forage cap, stuck with a jaunty air on the side of his head. He spoke English with fluency, and was evidently altogether a person of superior rank to those around him. In fact, I became jealous of this Frenchman; and for the first time in my life I felt those pangs of the green-eyed monster, which have never been so truly and so fearfully depicted as by the poet of all times and nations.

My feelings soon became too powerful for restraint; they were speedily perceived by Harriet, and were as speedily allayed by that delightful tact which is peculiar to the sex. By a fascinating freedom of tone and manner in the presence of my fancied rival, she, in a moment, dispelled my fears; and taking my arm, the first time she had condescended to so much familiarity, she walked up and down the avenue with me, while I could perceive her sister and Adolphe Berton, for so the Frenchman was called, in animated and delighted conversation, *tête-à-tête*.

Thenceforward I became more reconciled to, and more intimate with the poor prisoner, who had lost his liberty at the battle of Vimiera, and was now pining his soul away for the field of honour and the clash of arms. One only source of comfort, if not of happiness, he possessed in the love of Jane Sibley, which he repaid with interest, not only as a means of present enjoyment, but as the instrument of some ulterior advantage which he doubtless had in contemplation.

Time now flew with me on eagle's pinions, for I was perfectly happy and free from care. My regimental and garrison duties were performed with zeal and assiduity; I was high in estimation with the heads of the regiment, and a favourite with my brother officers generally: nay, I began to be talked of in the garrison as a first-rate billiard and racket player, a linguist, a good fencer, a crack shot, and a dashing horseman; for though I kept no cattle of my own, I hunted frequently in Leicestershire with Colonel Foley and Lord Rodney, and always rode their matches at the Stamford races, where "Percy Blake" soon became a "household word." Add to this, there were few men in the garrison who could out-walk, out-run, or out-jump me; and though my figure was slight and wiry, I could pitch a light or a heavy stone with any grenadier in the regiment, this being one item in that system of specious idleness, the besetting sin of the youth of Ireland. Then, again, I was the envy of my brother subs for being *all on velvet*, as they termed it, with *la Belle Harriette*; and though my old tormenter, Davis, now and then reminded me that I was on the debit side of his ledger, an occasional remittance from my brother always enabled me to book up in time to save my credit, as a guarantee for a future advance.

But still there was some little hitch in my happiness that, like the ruthless gnaw in the liver of an old Indian, I could not get over; for it had been insinuated to me by some good-natured friend, who was jealous of my good fortune, that there was actually some sort of engagement between Harriet and a cousin of hers at Stamford, a rich farmer and manufacturer of the real, ripe, and palmy Stilton. It is true, he was represented to me as very plain, round and squat, like his own cheeses, with a huge shock head of red hair, large green spectacles, and otherwise a guy; but the intelligence made me so uneasy that I actually questioned Jane on the subject of this reputed engagement.

"Well," she replied, "there is, or was something in the matter; for mamma was very anxious about it, my cousin being very wealthy, and having quite a splendid establishment."

"And does he presume to aspire to Harriet?" I demanded.

"Oh, most ardently," she replied with a smile; "even though he has heard of a certain Hotspur from the sister island."

"And how does Harriet receive his addresses?" I asked.

"She doesn't care about him," said Jane, naively, "especially since—ahem—but you needn't trouble yourself about him."

"Especially since when?" I eagerly demanded.

"I'll tell you another time," she replied in some confusion, "but there's mamma calling me in the garden." And off she ran.

"Especially since—!" Oh, that excruciating hiatus, which left me suspended between the heaven of hope and the gulf of despair. There was, however, something encouraging in the half-confidence with which I had been favoured, and I mustered impudence enough, when I met Harriet, to utter some stupid witticisms about Wigsbys, milk-pans, cheese-vats, &c., which made her look excessively grave, and put a sudden stop to our conversation.

For three or four days after this I could not get even a glimpse of my divinity, till at last I began to think I had given her mortal offence, and was revolving in my own mind whether I should shoot myself or Wigsby, when a little urchin from Stilton put a note into my hand, and walked off without waiting for an answer.

I opened the missive, and found, to my great delight, that it was from Harriet, asking me to meet her that evening at a well-known stile, midway between the village and the Cross.

True to the touch, I was there at the appointed hour, and had not long to wait for my belle. She was accompanied by a little brother and a huge Newfoundland dog, and held out her hand to me as she approached; her charming face all radiant with mantling smiles. We took a few turns across the fields, and after mutual explanations and concessions on my part, were once more happy in each other's society.

"By the bye," she said, at parting, "I have a small favour to ask of you."

"To command, you mean, my dear Harriet," I exclaimed with energy. "Am I not your knight, bound to obey your behest, at peril of life and limb?"

"Nay, nay," she hastily replied; "I would not put you in peril for the world;" and she laid her hand upon mine with a gentle pressure, smiling in my face as only a fond woman knows how.

"Well, then," I said, as I conveyed her hand to my lips, "tell me at once what I can do for you."

"'Tis merely," she replied, rather hesitating, "to procure me the countersign for to-morrow night."

"Oh!" I cried, laughing, "is that your mighty request? I confess you mortify me most exceedingly."

"Nay," she said, "if it be inconvenient—"

"Not in the least, dearest," I replied. "You shall have it to-morrow afternoon, the moment I receive it myself." And we parted.

It may perhaps be known to the reader, that in garrison towns during the war, and especially at a place of so much consequence as Norman Cross, all persons approaching the post of a sentinel at night are challenged to give the countersign, in default of which they are arrested till they can satisfactorily account for themselves. At the Cross, where a tenfold vigilance was necessary, the countersign for the night was not issued by General Williams, the commandant, till late in the afternoon, and then it was communicated to the officers of the garrison through their respective commanding officers, in a little note sent to the mess-room. At a convenient moment, when this note had been seen by a sufficient number to give it circulation, I seized it, galloped down to Stilton, put the magic scroll into the fair hand of my Harriet, and was amply repaid by a profusion of thanks, and a shower of ethereal smiles.

It was stranger-night, and I sat late at the mess, making arrangements for joining Sir Gilbert Heathcote's hounds the following day with Colonel Foley, and dine with the "Hunt" after. When at last I sallied forth to go to my own quarters, I found it was blowing a gale of wind, and the old wooden buildings were creaking in the blast. It was, however, a fine clear night otherwise; the moon was struggling through a mass of clouds that seemed shattered by the tempest, and lit up the surrounding objects with fitful gleams that vanished as suddenly in the deepest gloom. Now, I dearly love this warring of the elements, when the atmosphere is free from rain, while the blustering wind braces the relaxed frame, and stimulates the blood to redoubled action; therefore, wrapping my cloak around me, and strapping my forage-cap under my chin, I determined to take a stroll, to cool me a little after a more than usual devotion to the rosy god.

As I sauntered on, not knowing whither to direct my steps, my ear was saluted by the deep challenge of a sentry.

"Who goes there?"

"Friend!" I replied.

"Advance, friend," said the sentry, "and give the countersign."

I advanced close up to the sentry, and whispering the countersign in his ear, walked on.

"Pass, friend!" cried the sentry, "and all's well."

This little scene reminded me of Harriet; and insensibly I strolled

down the road to Stilton; cogitating, as I breasted the gale, on the pleasant posture of my affairs, and comparing every sudden puff that assailed me to some rude shock of fortune which it was my duty and my pride to conquer. By the time I had got to the end of a long imaginary concatenation of fortuitous events, I passed close in front of my charmer's residence, which was only separated from the road by an ornamental railing and a narrow slip of flower-garden.

It was very late, but I could perceive, through a chink in the shutters, a light in the parlour; and wondering what could keep them up at such an unseasonable hour, I stopped for a moment. To my astonishment, I heard a man's voice within; and instantly the demon of jealousy seized upon my soul, for I could not suppose it to be any other than my rival, Wigsby.

Warmed with wine, and excited by exercise, I felt my passion mastering my reason, and I determined to be satisfied on the instant about this mysterious affair. I accordingly rushed up to the door, and gave a loud single knock, that I might not put them on their guard, and enable Wigsby to escape. I had to repeat it, however, before it was answered; and, when the servant-girl saw who stood before her, she gave a squeak, threw the door in my face, and bolted off into the parlour. I instantly followed, and before she had time to fasten the door I was in the apartment, and found myself face to face with *la belle Harriette* and that detestable Wigsby!

I had never seen the fellow before, but there could be no mistake in the matter, for there was the punchy figure, with the large green spectacles, and the horrid shock head of red hair. They had been indulging, forsooth, in a *tête-à-tête*, Miss Harriet being determined to have two strings to her bow; but, though so palpably caught in *flagrant délit*, they stood calm and collected before me.

"So, madam!" I exclaimed, as well as passion would permit my utterance, "I have at length discovered your treachery and falsehood."

"Pray, sir," said Harriet, with the most dignified *hauteur*, "how dare you presume to enter this house at such an hour, and with so little ceremony?"

Her effrontery, I confess, somewhat abashed me; but, sustained by my passion, I replied:

"It was Providence that directed me hither, to save me from misfortune and disgrace."

"And now that you have attained your object," retorted Harriet, while fire flashed from her eyes, "be good enough to retire; for I have never given, and never shall give you, any right whatever to dictate to me what company I shall keep."

"Then, farewell," I cried, "for ever, false perjured woman, since you have got one that is evidently nearer and dearer to you than I am."

"He is," she replied, with a faint, ambiguous smile, "justly dear; and, I hope, will soon be nearer to me than he is at present."

"Harriet!" I cried, while tears of agony gushed from my eyes, "you have embittered my existence; but I forgive, and hope I shall

soon forget you. As for this cheese-making snob, I have all the mind in the world to shake him out of his shoes."

Here I put my hand on Wigsby's breast, to show how easily I could carry my threat into execution; but he grappled with me in turn, and no longer master of myself, I shook him till his red wig and green spectacles fell off, and Adolphe Berton stood before me, while Harriet's shrieks brought in her mother and sister. The latter, exclaiming, "All is lost and ruined!" fainted in the arms of her lover.

For my part, I felt as if the crash of thunder that was pealing outside had fallen upon my devoted head; and I stood amidst the ruin I had caused, in mute astonishment. At length, Jane, having recovered from her swoon, threw herself at my feet, and implored my pity for her hapless lover and her still more unhappy self. Her mother knelt by her side; and finally Harriet, sinking on her knees, took my hand, and bedewed it with her eloquent tears.

I could hold out no longer: I grasped the hand of the young Frenchman, who had hitherto stood aloof in proud defiance, and said:—

"Berton, my duty forbids me to assist you to escape, but I never, never will betray you."

"Generous enemy!" cried Berton, warmly pressing my hands in his, "I thought you had a noble heart. I now only hope that fortune may one day put it in my power to requite you for this, and I swear to Heaven that I will not let the opportunity slip."

Fortune did put in his power at a subsequent period in the Peninsula, and he nobly redeemed his pledge.

We all sat down now, to calm our agitated spirits, and wait the arrival of the mail, which was to bear Adolphe to London, where he hoped to conceal himself till an opportunity offered for returning to the continent. Meanwhile I was let into the secret of his escape.

When his fellow-prisoners were locked up for the night, he had contrived to evade the vigilance of the turnkey, who, as it very often happened, was somewhat fuddled; and he remained outside in the quadrangle, concealing himself, and awaiting a favourable moment to proceed. Another piece of good fortune was the sudden tempest that came on; for amidst the hurly-burly of the elements, he sawed through one of the palings without being heard by any of the sentries. He was now in the main central avenue of the prison, but still he had many barriers, gateways, and lines of sentinels to pass. Being furnished, however, through my unconscious means, with the countersign, he boldly proceeded, and passed all impediments without exciting the least suspicion. He then hurried down to the house of his mistress, which he entered in the disguise of her cousin, in order to baffle the surmises of all who might see him; and so well had he assumed the semblance of that monster, that the servant-girl herself was imposed upon: hence her confusion, and the squeak she gave on seeing me; expecting a disturbance, of course, when I should surprise Miss Harriet with her country beau.

The mail at length arrived; Berton departed for London, and I bade adieu to my sweet mistress, who said to me archly, as she pressed my hand:

"I hope you are now effectually cured of the 'green-eyed monster?'"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LANCASHIRE WITCHES.

WAKING happiness does not always produce pleasant dreams, otherwise mine that night would have been redolent of bliss; for I was conscious I had done a generous action, by which two deserving individuals were saved from misery, and I had a firm conviction in the attachment of my mistress. Still, however, the spirit, as if prescient of evil, struggled under its mystic conjunction with matter, and the result was nightmare, and all the hag's attendant horrors.

In the morning, I was roused from a deep slumber by the voice of Richardson, who rushing into my room, cried out in joyous accents:—

"Well, Percy, my boy, you're in for a row at last, when you least expect it."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, starting out of my bed, "what is the matter?"

"Don't be frightened," he replied, laughing at my agitation. "It's only a small matter of fighting, which I know won't come amiss to you."

"Oh! if that be all," I said, wonderfully relieved; for at first it struck me that Berton had been retaken, and a discovery made of my connivance at his escape.

"The Lancashire weavers," resumed my friend, "are in open rebellion, burning power-looms, factories, and Cotton-Lords' palaces; and we are off, at a forced march, for the scene of action."

"Oh, Lord!" I exclaimed, sitting down disconsolately on my bed side, "what on earth am I to do?"

"What's the matter?" demanded Richardson.

"My poor Harriet!" I exclaimed with a sigh.

"Nonsense, man!" said my friend. "You take the distemper like a pointer pup,—pardon the simile; but 'twill go off after three days' march. Moreover, between you and me, you are not yet fit for marriage."

"You think then," I said slyly, "that I want a little more schooling at billiards."

"Well," he replied, "you may make a better hazard than matrimony just now; and, depend upon it, your church canons are by no means so pleasant as those of the Board of Green Cloth. But, come, dress and take your breakfast: your toast would have been all burnt to a cinder, if I hadn't ate it myself."

I got up with a heavy heart, dressed, breakfasted, and walked over

to the orderly-room, where the adjutant was dictating to a dozen clerks and orderly-sergeants; and there I learned that we were to march at five o'clock the following morning for Rochdale in Lancashire. All the guards were being relieved, baggage waggons loading, mess-plate packing, orderlies running in all directions, and the quarter-master drawing sixty rounds of ammunition per man from the garrison magazine; it was, in short, the first outbreak of what has since been termed "the Luddite War."

There was now no time to be lost; so giving Tom King the necessary instructions to prepare for the road, I walked down to Stilton; ruminating all the way on the best method of communicating this sad intelligence to Harriet, and thinking how I, who so much wanted consolation myself, could impart any to her.

I found Mrs. Sibley and her daughters sitting at work, and all were very grateful to me for my conduct the night before. The two girls were sadly shocked, however, when I told them the news, especially Harriet, whose fine eyes kept filling with tears, till, at length, she was compelled to retire. Her mother, I fancied, bore the matter with great philosophy. Perhaps, with the calculating coolness of age and experience, she thought Wigsby, with his wealthy establishment, would be a more eligible match than Ensign Blake, with his shifting inheritance of barrack-yard, and his personal chattels of camp furniture. She was right, I have now no doubt; but, at that time, I regarded her in the light of a cruel and remorseless stepmother.

I shall not trouble the reader with all the tender misery of leave-taking, for love scenes are only interesting to the parties concerned.

Suffice it to say, that Harriet and I vowed interminable affection, exchanged keepsakes, and promised to write to each other, at least, twice a week. We then kissed and parted; but such were the ever-springing changes in my "strange, eventful history," that I have never seen her since. Time, the great soother of all human calamities, which has left nothing more in my seared heart than a tender recollection of my early love, has, I trust, been equally bountiful to poor Harriet; and if she still live, the happy mother of a host of young cheese-makers, perhaps her eye, as it wanders o'er my humble page, may yet drop a tear on this last sad tribute to her worth.

But, hurrah! the road is before us; the battle of life, the field of destiny invite us on; and the misty future, like Indra's heaven in the Hindoo mythology, spreads its banquets of delusions to our longing eyes. We commenced our march at daylight on the following morning; but before I quitted Norman Cross, I was gratified to learn that Berton had not left a single trace of his flight, and that he had every prospect of getting clear off to the continent.

My first march from Chelmsford was mere child's play, compared to the one I was now engaged in: forty miles a day, and this continuously for six days, tried our stamina very severely; but the weather was fine, and waggons were pressed every now and then to carry the men's knapsacks and give an occasional lift to the weary and foot-sore. At length we reached the lofty and rugged eminence

of Blackstone Edge, where we piled our arms and halted for half-an-hour: looking down upon one of those broad and verdant valleys of the manufacturing district, which would be eminently beautiful, if the gawky factories and smoky chimneys did not mar their picturesque outlines. As we again got under arms, and prepared to descend this lofty boundary between two such immense counties, a mad dog ran in amongst us; and while every one was endeavouring to get out of his way, as he gnashed his teeth and snapped at us with rabid fury, one of our mounted officers took a pistol from his holster and shot him; at the same time expressing a hope, that it would be the only blood we should have to shed in this domestic campaign. The omen, however, was not altogether vain.

On arriving at Rochdale, a large manufacturing town at the other extremity of the valley, the regiment was partly distributed in billets, and partly lodged in an old factory, where a miscellaneous collection of barrack furniture was supplied, for the nonce, by general contribution of the inhabitants. The officers were accommodated in the large private mansion of a great Cotton-Lord, who had quitted the country in alarm and disgust, when the disturbances had gained such a head as to threaten life and property. Here we had scarcely effected a lodgement, when we were inundated with visitors; the Entwistles, the Royds, the Walmsleys, the Vavasours, the Holts, the Smiths; in short, the heads of all the principal families in the town and neighbourhood called on us, and so overwhelmed us with civilities and invitations to dinners, balls, concerts, pic-nics, &c., that I began to fancy myself suddenly transported to my native land, in its palmiest days of prosperity and social enjoyment.

A great deal of this hospitable feeling, altogether so novel in England, must, of course, be ascribed to the disturbed state of the country, which invested the arrival of an armed force with so much real importance in the eyes of all who had anything to lose; but it would be unjust not to give the people credit for a great share of sincerity in the good feeling they professed. For my part, having been constantly received with almost parental kindness by many wealthy families, doubtless from a regard for my boyhood, for I was yet but sixteen, I shall ever entertain a grateful recollection of this my first and happiest campaign in the manufacturing district of Lancashire.

"And the Lancashire witches?" I think I hear a reader exclaim. Ah! thereby hangs a tale; and I fear it will not redound to the honour of my fidelity. But let me not anticipate, for I really did still adore my far-distant Harriet, and had already exchanged letters with her; giving, in return for her simple and natural effusions, a somewhat melo-dramatic history of my "moving accidents by flood and field" in the course of my northern peregrinations; descanting on the stubborn fortitude with which, in spite of tortured feet and muscular suffering, I had walked the whole way to set a due example to the soldiery, while the greatest veterans and hugest grenadiers had knocked up and been glad to take refuge in the waggons; how I waded through rivers and rivulets, and clambered over rocks and

mountains; how I volunteered to lead the advanced guard, and kept a sharp look-out with my Light-Bobs for lurking Luddites: in short, I fear my letter must have excited laughter instead of sympathy; for Harriet must have looked on her *preux chevalier* as a little of the romantic, and a great deal of the Gascon.

But the war is afoot, and I must sharpen my pen and nerve my style for the martial despatch rather than the effeminate love-letter. In one place, a steam-engine and a dozen power-looms are destroyed; in another, a factory with three hundred windows burnt to the ground; night and day we are on the alert, defending chateaux, extinguishing incendiary fires, putting mobs to the rout, apprehending Luddites, &c., &c. And then such scenes of squalid poverty and wretchedness as we had unwillingly to witness: fathers of families daily thrown out of work by the increase of steam machinery, incapable of earning food for their families by any other employment than the one to which they had been all their lives accustomed! Mothers with infants perishing at their breast, through the exhaustion of the maternal fount! Children in the agony of starvation gazing on their hapless parents with looks of mingled reproach and pity! Alas! alas! Holbein, to harrow up the soul, has painted the "Dance of Death," but still more frightful is the Dance of Life!

Meanwhile, unbounded hospitality reigned in the houses of the rich, and the gallant defenders of accumulated wealth were everywhere the welcome and the favoured guests. For them, the table groaned under its load of luxury; for them, beauty lavished its countless fascinations; for them, vocal and instrumental harmony filled the echoing concert-room, and the mazy dance spread its bland allurements. Billiard-rooms we had in abundance, and no markers to pay; horses we had to ride, preserves to shoot, and hounds to follow; while the worthy cotton-spinners, smothering in a plethora of wealth, seemed delighted with the healthy drain of which we were the willing instruments.

On a day, "alack the day!" it should be blotted from the stainless almanac of true love, I had accepted an invitation to dinner at the princely mansion of a mill-owner on the outskirts of the town. I had been up all night with a party of Light Bobs, charging a gang of poor Luddites over moss and mountain, and had only got to bed at six o'clock in the morning, sleepy and fatigued beyond everything. I therefore did not wake till five o'clock in the afternoon; and as the dinner-hour was somewhat early, I had to hurry my preparations. Three or four others were also going, and we walked up together; but finding the time was rapidly decreasing, we set to and had a run for it. I distanced my companions; but, not satisfied with this, when I arrived at the entrance to the domain, I made a spring, and jumping over a very handsome gate of ornamental iron-work, about five feet high, found myself on the other side in the presence of a bevy of ladies, who had been screened from view by the boughs and foliage of a splendid acacia.

A general scream evinced the terror of these flushed birds of paradise; for they looked upon my saltatory entrance as the advent

of a gang of Luddites. The fair hostess, however, who was one of the party, and some other ladies of my acquaintance, received me with smiles of welcome; and I was presented to three strangers, a widow lady with two daughters, just arrived from Bath.

A widow lady with two daughters! Strange coincidence! Fluellin found a sympathetic chord between the river in Wales and the river in Macedon; but how were I to discover an equally cogent reason for attaching myself to these lovely strangers, for lovely they certainly were? Mrs. Netherby was in full possession of those three great requisities once so essential to the Mahommedan Elysium of Carlton Palace. Her eldest daughter, Theodosia, was full of grace, liveliness, and badinage; but the younger, and by far the lovelier, was quiet, amiable, and reposed, like Harriet. Go to! there's more sympathy for you.

Her movements were grace itself, her voice ethereal melody, her smile an embodied affection; you almost looked after it as, in imagination, it soared aloft to seek its native heaven. I know not how I felt when I took wine with her at dinner; but this I know, that the humble juice of the Burgundian grape was suddenly changed to that super-celestial liquid which, according to the Koran, Soliman-ben-Daoud has sealed with his own wise signet for the lips of True Believers; and when I touched her hand in the dance, I distinctly felt my love for poor Harriet oozing out, like the courage of Bob Acres, at my fingers' ends. Yet but a month, "a little month," had elapsed since I vowed interminable love to that injured fair one. A month!—nay, not a month—the very ink was scarcely dry of my last amorous epistle—and yet——

“ Oh, frailty! thy name is Percy Blake! ”

Mrs. Netherby and her fair daughters were natives of Lancashire, but had lived some years at Bath, where Mr. Netherby had recently died, leaving his brother, a wealthy mill-owner, joint guardian with his widow of the two young ladies. With this crusty old bachelor, for such I heard he was, they were now residing, being only on a visit of a few days with the family where I met them.

I slept but little that night, thinking of the fair vision I had encountered; and the next morning, at the very earliest of all possible visiting hours, I was on my way to the shrine of my new divinity, in whose celestial presence the impression of the previous evening was more than strengthened, it was irrevocably confirmed:—yes, irrevocable is the word; for who of mortal mould could withstand such a galaxy of charms?

We walked through the grounds, the garden, the conservatory together; laughed and chatted; talked of horticulture and flower exhibitions; but, to my shame, it became evident that I scarcely knew the difference between a lily and a carnation. Poetry and the *bell' arti* and romance then succeeded; and I was delighted to find that Mary had read nearly as much, and could appreciate quite as well, as myself; which was, however, not saying a great deal for either of us. In short, time flew with more than proverbial velocity;

"with her conversing, I forgot all seasons," and parades; and at six o'clock I was seated, I knew not how, by her side at the dinner-table: nay, so utterly oblivious was I of the "outward barbarians" who composed the world around us, that having asked her to take wine, and fancying myself at home with "the apple-greens," I called out in a voice of command: "Mess-waiter, champagne!"

This, of course, caused an explosion of laughter at my expense; but I joined the merriment with all my heart and soul, while the face and neck of my ineffable Mary were suffused with blushes, for on her every eye was fixed as the sufficing cause of my blunder. In short, I had paid a morning visit to my kind friends, and it was long past midnight before I could tear myself away. As I tumbled into bed, that fellow, Richardson, thrust in his ugly phiz, and cried out loud enough to alarm the main guard: "In for it again, old fellow! I told you how quick you would take the distemper."

The short visit of the Netherbys was about to terminate; but I begged hard for a respite. I represented to them the really dangerous state of the country about Mr. Netherby's mill, the most disturbed portion of the district. I told them we were getting up races, subscription balls, and private theatricals; and, at length, I prevailed on the dear mamma to get invited to another friend's house in the very town of Rochdale, actually only a few hundred yards from my own quarters! Only fancy my delight!

But, poor Harriet! Alas! the thought of poor dear Harriet came over my heart like a withering blight; and I was compelled, as I fancied, in self-defence, to plunge into every sort of dissipation. I had not written to her for some time, and I reproached myself bitterly for my neglect, promising my accusing conscience that I would speedily make up for all by writing her a very voluminous and affectionate epistle, worth a dozen scribbled in the ordinary manner; but I fear that my countrymen, according to the Portuguese proverb, contribute more to the paving of a certain place than all the other "peoples" (to use a recently-adopted Gallicism) of the old world or the new. This plaguy epistle was put off from hour to hour, and from day to day, till at last it was dismissed altogether from my mind, like a hateful unnecessary school task.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COTTON-LORD.

ABOUT this time we gave a splendid ball, in return for the many civilities we had received; and as the committee, of which I was one, had *carte-blanche*, we certainly spared neither trouble nor expense, as the managers say, in getting it up.

The ground floor of our mansion consisted of two splendid drawing-rooms, in one of which we generally messed: these were tastefully laid out for dancing; the floors were chalked by a London

artist, and the walls, hung with festoons of flowers, sparkled with brilliant girandoles, which shed a perfumed light around. The lawn was occupied by a suite of marquees, wherein a magnificent supper was spread for our numerous guests; and while a portion of our band played some of the fine old airs from "Don Juan," the "Zauberflöte," "Cosi fan tutti," &c., a select few, in civilian full dress, well trained to the violin and bass, and led by our bandmaster, played exquisitely for the dancers. That night, that happy night, I had the unspeakable pleasure of walking a minuet with my beloved Mary; for this last remnant of courtly elegance had not as yet entirely disappeared.

I think I now see myself, in this age of short crops and other vulgarities, with my hair curled up in a lofty toupee, pomatumed and powdered with the most delicate art; my long *queue* clasped to the collar of my coat, and hanging down lower than my very long waist; my coat buttoned back, my white-flowered Marseilles waistcoat, white casimere small-clothes, flesh-coloured silk stockings, and shoes with silver buckles; my opera hat under my arm, and a white silk waist-belt supporting a handsome dirk by my side; did I not fancy myself the "glass of fashion and the mould of form!" *Eheu fugaces!* Half a century has nearly elapsed since that happy period; and even at the risk of being classed amongst the *laudator temporis acti* tribe, I must express my regret that the glories of ancient costume should be so totally eclipsed by Blucher boots, Wellington overalls, and ruffianly hats called wide-awakes!

It was, however, a period of transition in the *régime* of the ball-room; the stately dresses and dances of the olden time, the *menuet de la cour*, the embroidered coat, the bag wig and sword, and laced ruffles and frills, were reluctantly giving way before the prim and finical costume, the frisky waltz, and flirting quadrille of the succeeding period; "Sir Roger de Coverly" and the "Boulanger" being a sort of commonwealth interregnum.

As I had acquired the continental dances at Norman Cross, and Mary and her sister had been accustomed to them at Bath, we got up a very successful quadrille; and even flew through the room in *la sauteuse*, to the astonishment of the cotton-spinners, who had never seen anything of the kind before. Thus, I may say, that, through our means, the introduction of the waltz was coeval in Lancashire with that of the power-loom. What a revolution in arts and manners has been caused by both!

It is needless to say that the whole of this grand entertainment passed off with decided *éclat*, and we were universally voted to be an immense acquisition to the manufacturing district in every respect. It was succeeded by races, at which I had the good fortune to ride two winning horses, and to be hailed each time as I came in triumphantly by the immense assemblage of beauty and fashion that crowded our temporary stand; displaying, as I conspicuously did upon my left arm, a circlet of violets and rose-buds, gathered for me that morning by the fair hands of the beautiful Mary.

In the evening we had, of course, a race-ball; and this was succeeded by a series of subscription assemblies, which were attended

by every one of any consequence in the whole district. They were, however, productive of something that was not quite pleasant to me: for some "good-natured friend" wrote to old Netherby, strictly confidential, of course, that his favourite niece, with her large fortune and great expectations, was actually throwing herself away on an Irishman whom nobody knew, and who, in all probability, was nothing but a mere fortune-hunter, that had nothing to settle on his wife but his portion of the barrack-yard. All this came to my ears long after, when it was too late to remedy the evil.

Old Netherby came into town in an immense fluster, and insisted on his wards going off with him instantly to the country, with which arbitrary command they were, it seems, bound to comply. I caught them just as they were stepping into the carriage; but when I ran up to salute them as usual, the old cotton-twister called out in a gruff voice, "Keep your distance, sir!" Shocked and astonished as I felt, I was prevented from chastising him on the spot by an imploring look from Mary, whose eyes filled with tears as she held out her hand, and indulged me with a gentle pressure; while Mrs. Netherby kindly bade me farewell, and Theodosia favoured me with a warmer adieu as she playfully hummed the well-known refrain from "*Joconde*,"

"Et l'on revient toujours
À ses premières amours!"

which fortunately was all Arabic to the ignorant old factory-boy.

Thus unjustly and cavalierly was I treated by this money-grubbing old hunk; but I had a glorious revenge not long after.

During all these gay doings in town, the country continued in a dreadful state of disturbance, in spite of all our efforts; and no troops were ever worked harder on actual service than we were at this period. But our proceedings against the unhappy and misguided Luddites were always marked with clemency; and it was with pity, almost amounting to horror, that we ever came into actual collision with them, from which, of course, they always suffered severely. Yet we had a stern duty to perform to the government and the community at large; and I am happy to say that we did so to the entire satisfaction of the authorities, and of all rational and reflecting persons who were witnesses of our conduct.

One night, when I had gone to bed, hoping to dream of my absent Mary, I was suddenly roused from my first sleep by Tom King, bearing an order for me to start immediately with a detachment of twenty rank and file, to protect Mr. Netherby's mill.

"Burn old Netherby!" I exclaimed in my wrath. "I hope they'll set fire to his mill, and stick him on the top of it."

Strange to say, this was precisely the feat they attempted to perform.

I set off, however, with my detachment in light spring waggons, which were always kept ready for such emergencies; and, though the distance was thirty miles, we galloped it in three hours. It was fortunate that we did so, for the attack was already commenced, and the Luddites were breaking in the hall-door of the dwelling-house with

sledge hammers. The entrance to the grounds being obstructed by an *abattis* of young trees, uprooted for the purpose, we dismounted, and, forming in sections, went up the avenue at double quick. I had given my men orders not to fire, and to do as little mischief as possible. Consequently, the Luddites, whom we instantly scattered, escaped with a few bayonet wounds. Having some old guns and pistols amongst them, they had the madness, however, to fire, and wound two of my party; but I effectually dispersed them with a volley, which brought down two or three half-naked wretches, happily, without killing them.

I leave the reader to judge of my delight, when I opened the door of the parlour, whence issued several female screams, in every tone and cadence, caught the trembling and almost fainting Mary in my arms, and was actually kissed by her mother and sister.

After all, I was still a mere youth; and might, without any imputation on their discretion, be treated by these dear ladies, in such an emergency, as a son and a brother. I restored their confidence, by assuring them that every danger had vanished; and was overwhelmed with grateful thanks by all, for my timely assistance. I then inquired for Mr. Netherby, who was nowhere to be found; but, while we were engaged in searching for him, some one cried out, "The mill! the mill is on fire!"

Looking towards this source of wealth, in which the soul of old Netherby was wrapped up, and which stood over a brook three or four hundred yards from the house, we saw the flames bursting out from some of its numerous windows. Leaving a guard to protect the dwelling-house, I formed the rest in line, gave the word "double!" and we were speedily alongside the mill, which was now burning at a furious rate, while old Netherby, at one of the second-floor windows, was shouting for assistance with all his lungs.

The Luddites, not satisfied with destroying his property, had actually locked him up in his own mill, to perish by the most horrible of all deaths. The sufferings, whether real or imaginary, of such people, must have been great, indeed, to drive them to such extremities.

The moment the old man recognized me by the light of the flames, he cried out, in a voice of agony,—

"Oh! captain, captain, save my life! save my life!"

"Excuse me, sir," I coolly replied; "I know how to keep my distance."

"Nay, nay, captain dear," he exclaimed, "I heartily beg thee pardon. Dontee, dontee, let me perish in this awsome manner, and I'll do anything for thee in t' varsal world."

But I turned a deaf ear to his entreaties, and had the cruelty to look on unmoved, till he was thoroughly frightened, when he began to curse and blaspheme at an awful rate. I then directed the men to place a long ladder up against the window, and the half-delirious wretch descended; but not a moment too soon, for his coat-tails were actually singed with the devouring element.

The mill, however, was burnt to the ground; but, as the cunning

old curmudgeon was fully insured, he lost little or nothing by the night's transaction. He never forgave me for not saving him five minutes sooner than I did; and when he and his nieces moved into Rochdale, for protection, till the storm blew over, he had influence enough to get me sent on detachment to Oldham, where I was recommended to keep close, and study—patience, and the eighteen manœuvres.

CHAPTER X.

THE FACTORY HOP.

AT that period, Oldham was, I think, the most detestable hole I had ever put my foot into; what it may be since it was promoted to the rank of a borough, and has got a man of sense and eloquence to represent it in Parliament, I can't say; but an inference may be drawn from that circumstance to its advantage. It was a mean, ugly, ill-built, straggling, dirty, dingy, gloomy-looking old place; the very refuse and dust-hole, so to speak, of the entire manufacturing district. It was always enveloped in rain, or drizzle, or mist, and its inhabitants were cross, ill-tempered, sour, and suspicious; if a dog only barked in the street—and they were always barking—this vocal expression of thought, or instinct, was sure to terminate in a half-frantic howl, or a melancholy whine; and even the very cats, as they made love in the gutters of the steep, sombre, puritanical house-tops, vented their amorous wishes in a combination of diabolical yells and screams that often drove me distracted.

I was quartered in an old deserted mansion a little way in the fields off the main street; and the magistrate, as he put me in possession, hinted that it was large enough for all my detachment, if I chose to have them with me, to defend me from the Luddites. I cared nothing at all about the Luddites, I said; they and I were very good friends till we came to blows, and then we always paid off old scores till the next day of reckoning. I therefore requested the magistrate to put the men into billets, which would be more agreeable to them, and keep them more *au courant* as to what was passing amongst the enemy. The magistrate complied with my wishes, and I was thus left in peaceable possession of the old *casa*, with my orderly, and Tom King, who was a very good cook in a small way, and expert and handy in all other respects.

It was now the depth of winter (1803), and the snow lay thick upon the earth; its pure white mantle, which wrapped in its ample fold the country round, as far as the eye could reach, bringing out in more grim and startling relief the hunch of dark, shapeless buildings that constituted the town of Oldham; while the tall chimneys of its numerous factories sent forth in rapid succession huge volumes of thick black smoke that looked like vast blotches of London mud dashed against the cold, leaden background of the sky.

The prospect was indeed dreary beyond description ; but I exerted myself to make all snug in my own especial quarter, which was a room on the first floor, fortunately wind and water-tight. Here I laid down my carpet, wheeled my camp-bed within a few paces of the fire-place, which always blazed and crackled cheerfully ; piled my table with books, drawings, and musical instruments ; then, with my pointer and water-spaniel reposing on the rug, and my fishing-rod, double-barrelled Manton, shot-belt, and game-bag, arranged artistically over the mantelpiece, I boldly bade defiance to the foul fiend. My servant and orderly made themselves equally comfortable in the kitchen, whither my pay-sergeant and two or three other old hands resorted of an evening to smoke a pipe and have a gossip, under pretence of asking for orders, which they well knew I never troubled them with, as everything in this delectable old regiment went like a patent chronometer.

I must not, however, forget my "stranger's room ;" a large, lofty, gloomy apartment, immediately over mine, with a huge yawning fire-place and elevated mantel-piece, altogether displaying a grim and ghastly aspect. It was, however, the only inhabitable room in the whole building, except my own and the kitchen ; but when I had it cleaned out, and hired a comfortable, capacious bed, with some other articles of furniture for it, it didn't make a bad bivouac for any chance visitors from head-quarters who might come over for a day's sport on the extensive moors, or mosses, as they are called, that lay around us.

Over this stranger's room was a suite of uninhabitable garrets ; and as the sky-lights were frequently blown off by the wind, the cats held high carnival therein, very often to the total banishment of sleep, even after a long day's fag on the moors.

With all my anxiety to see my beloved Mary again, I never went over to head-quarters ; for though I was not forbidden to do so, Sir George knew perfectly well that, where a point of duty was concerned, I stuck like a burr to my post, even to the sacrifice of my own dearest wishes. My brother-officers, however, frequently came over to see me ; and even Colonel Foley took it into his head one night to send a case of claret to my quarters, and bring over a whist party with him, to enjoy, as he said, a quiet rubber of five guinea points *sub rosa*. I gave them a good out-post supper of spatchcocks, devilled drumsticks, fried bacon and eggs, and roasted potatoes ; and the claret case having been emptied, we finished the *sederunt* with Irish whisky, of which I had recently received a dozen bottles from my brother, who had paid a short business visit to Liverpool. My guests, who were all top-sawyers of the regiment, were highly gratified with their entertainment ; and I thought Foley would have gone into fits when I gave him a description of the roasting of old Netherby.

Still, however, "with all appliances and means to boot," the long, long evenings being somewhat irksome, I sighed for a return to that Elysium from which I had been unjustly banished by the jealousy of an ogre ; and though I felt immense pleasure in scribbling "sonnets to my mistress' eyebrow," all of which were duly inscribed to "the

belle of all Lancashire witches!" I would occasionally throw down the pen in dull despair that I was not rather playing duets, or dancing the *boulanger* with the fair enslaver herself.

It thus occurred to me one evening, about the middle of December, when, unable any longer to bear the burden of my own thoughts, I determined to sally out and visit my billets; just to ask, *pro formâ*, if there were any complaints, though nothing ever went amiss with the old "apple-greens." Tom King had received permission to spend the evening at a Christmas merry-making; for the factory boys and girls began their Christmas, as they did their day's work, betimes; so, leaving the cats and the orderly to keep house, forth I went, accompanied by my dogs, and wrapping my cloak about me, to keep off the biting wind of the bleak hill-side on which Oldham is built.

Having gone my rounds, and found all snug and ready for emergencies, I sauntered towards the outskirts of the town, and was about to return to my quarters; when, on turning a corner, the music of a violin, accompanied by loud laughter, and the sound of merry voices, struck my ear, issuing from a public-house a little off the road, the windows of which were all in a blaze of luminous tallow.

I strolled up to the scene of merriment, which was on the ground-floor, and as doors and windows were all wide open, I had no difficulty in gaining a complete view of this factory-hop. The room was crowded to excess with young men and women, dressed out in their best toggery, footing it right and left with all the noise and velocity of a steam-engine; while some of the seniors of both sexes were pledging each other in quarters of gin and pots of ale; and the concentrated smoke of three dozen pipes hovered, like a semi-diaphanous canopy, over the heads of the dancers.

All this part of the entertainment I could understand perfectly; but there was one circumstance that puzzled me exceedingly. In the midst of the dancers stood, with his back to me, an officer in the uniform of my regiment, apple-green facings, silver lace, &c. Nay, as I live, he had wings on his shoulders instead of epaulettes, and bore other unmistakable signs of belonging to my own company. Who could he possibly be? He was not like, in figure at least, any of my brother subs; and I could not at all fancy Lord Rodney taking a frisk in this unsophisticated fashion. The mysterious stranger, however, as if determined to baffle my curiosity, never once turned round, but kept his eyes fixed on his partner, a very pretty girl, who returned him glance for glance, and with interest.

At length, in the evolution of "cross hands and back again," I got a full view of my gentleman; and, "may I never die a sinner!" as they say in Ireland, if it was not the identical Tom King, dressed in full ball costume; with my second-best coatce, white waistcoat, casimere small-clothes, silk stockings and shoes, and silver buckles; his head one mass of pomatum and powder, and his left breast decorated with sundry pinch-beck crosses and copper medals, duly burnished for the great occasion!

I was, at first, terribly enraged at this desecration of my cherished uniform; but I could not help being amused when I saw the fellow's

airs and graces, his dignified demeanour, and patronising smiles; while factory-boys looked on with jealous eye, and factory-girls with bursting envy at the superior luck of her who had drawn this capital prize in the lottery of the festival. At length, when Mr. King had got to the top of the dance, and was about to go down the middle with his fair partner, I walked in, seized him by the ear, wheeled him round, and said,—

“Get out, you rascal! I’ll finish the dance for you.”

The amazement that seized on all present cannot be described; but when they saw their late “admired of all admirers” slink out of the room, they began to suspect the real state of the case. Every one crowded round me, putting a thousand questions; but I laid my cloak aside, made my bow to the destitute fair one, the Ariadne of the night, and said, if she did not prefer the man to the master, I would be most happy to lead her down the dance.

I now took the hand of my partner, who, “nothing loth,” seconded my efforts, and we went down the dance, to the admiration of all present. Many slapped me on the back, exclaiming, I was “a rum un to look at, but a good un to go!” while others handed me pots of ale and glasses of British gin, a beverage just one degree less atrocious than Spanish aguardiente. In short, I was the hero of the festival, a sort of honorary Luddite at a Grand Orient of the craft; and I would have willingly given my next month’s balance in the paymaster’s hand, if Foley could have seen me in the midst of my glory.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAT-ASTROPHE.

I SAID nothing to Mr. King, in the way of rebuke, for some days after, the poor devil looked so crest-fallen and repentant; but as muster-day (the 24th) was now drawing nigh, I thought it would be a good opportunity to employ him in a little scheme of revenge which I meditated on the paymaster, for his share in the adventure of Dorothy Dawkins. Poor Davis, with all his cleverness and cunning, was decidedly the greatest coward I ever met with in the shape of a man, and he had an especial horror of the Luddites and their doings, scarcely ever venturing a mile from head-quarters without a competent escort to guarantee his precious existence. On this failing I built my enterprise.

Davis would gladly have brought the detachment over to head-quarters to be mustered; indeed, he had the folly to propose this measure to the commanding officer, and met with a very just rebuke. He had nothing for it, therefore, but to face the danger; and he wrote me word that, as the roads were fairly snowed-up and impassable for a carriage, he would ride over early, that he might get back in good time for dinner, having some friends at mess. This

arrangement, however, did not suit my tactics ; so I sent Tom King to the different billets, to order the men to keep close, and not to stir out on any account, till they heard my bugle in the evening for muster. I then directed him to leave the sky-lights open, and to decoy all the cats he could into the attic exactly over the "strangers' room," where he was then to shut them up. He was, in the next place, to buy me a quantity of squibs, crackers, and blue-lights, and to provide a few bags of damp shavings, such as would give more smoke than flame. Thus prepared for action, I awaited the coming of the evening.

At twelve o'clock, Davis arrived in great bustle, exceedingly anxious to get over this indispensable piece of duty ; but he looked terribly blank when I told him the men were all absent.

"I have a sergeant and six out towards Manchester," I said, "where a fine cotton-mill was burnt down last night ; a corporal and four in the direction of Middleton, chasing some prisoners that have broken out of our jail ; another corporal's party has just been applied for by Higginbottom down there at the saw-mills, which are threatened with immediate conflagration ; and I hold the rest in hand to repel an attack of Luddites which the magistrates anticipate in the course of the night."

"Oh, good heavens !" cried Davis, "what am I to do ? Stay—let me see—I have it : I'll muster all the men you have at present, and return all the rest, absent on duty."

"You shall do no such thing," I replied ; "at least, I'll not sign your muster-roll, for I expect the men in every hour."

"My dear Blake," he said in a wheedling tone, "you will not, surely, make a difficulty with me in such a trifle as this."

"Duty is duty," I replied, "and must be attended to, in spite of friendship. If it were a private affair, now, such as placing you properly before the muzzle of an adversary's pistol in the *champ clos*, the case would be different."

"Good gracious !" he cried, apparently but little pleased with my hypothesis, "what is to be done ? I have all the Royds, Entwistles, Walmsleys, and Clutterbucks to dine with me to-day at the mess."

"You will still be in sufficient time," I said ; "for I told the men to make haste back to muster."

"I say, my dear fellow," cried the cunning attorney, taking me lovingly by the arm, "you know there's an old balance that's always a bone of contention between us."

"Well," I said, "what of it ?"

"I'll draw a pen through it," said Davis, "if you will only oblige me this once."

"Oh !" I exclaimed, with a look of offended dignity, "if you think to bribe me from the stern path of rectitude, you don't know your man, Mr. Davis," and turning on my heel, I left him to his cogitations."

These were, doubtless, bitter enough ; for hour followed hour in dull succession, and yet none of my absent parties came in. At last,

Davis ran up to me, as I walked backwards and forwards before the door with a cigar in my mouth, and cried,—

“Percy, my boy, have you nothing to eat in this old Castle Rack-rent of yours?”

“Dinner will be on the table in ten minutes,” I replied, looking at my watch; “and while we are enjoying ourselves, I have no doubt the parties will arrive.”

We accordingly sat down to table; but, in spite of creature comforts and generous old port, Davis was chap-fallen and down-hearted; for I kept plying him with imaginary stories of Luddite outrage and fearful conflagrations, in which I burnt more people than were ever accounted for in the bills of mortality. I described to him, also, the Lancashire system of gouging and heel-tapping.

“This Oldham,” I said, “is the wickedest place in the whole manufacturing district. If a fellow here once gets you down, Davis, he’ll twist his forefinger into that dandy side-lock of yours, and scoop out your eye with his thumb, as clean as a whistle.”

“Good gracious! what savages!” cried Davis, with a shudder.

“That is when they mean to be merciful,” I continued; “but, when really bent on mischief, they have recourse to heel-tapping.”

“What’s that?” demanded Davis.

“You have remarked the thick wooden-soled shoes they wear?” I said.

“Yes,” replied Davis, “and am astonished how they can walk in such things.”

“If a fellow gets you down here,” I said, “with one of those wooden shoes he’ll soon reduce your head to the consistency of a squashed egg-shell.”

These tales totally prostrated the small modicum of courage that fluttered in the breast of the paymaster. At last, when it began to grow dusk, and his patience and spirits were alike exhausted, enter Tom King, to inform me that Sergeant Edwards had arrived with his party, and sixteen wounded prisoners. A little time after, a similar announcement was made of the arrival of Corporal James, without any prisoners, having shot four Luddites dead.

“Then tell the bugler to sound for parade,” I said; “the other party may arrive while the men are falling in.”

The streets of Oldham soon resounded with the “too-to-to-too;” and in less than ten minutes my detachment marched into the court-yard, and drew up in front of my quarters.

“Bless my soul!” said Davis, who was fortunately near-sighted, “your men look very fresh and clean after such hard service.”

“Oh, yes,” I answered, “I keep my detachment always in prime order; we pride ourselves on that point at Oldham.”

“Now,” said Davis, “let us proceed at once, for I have not a moment to lose.”

We accordingly descended to the court-yard; and, fortunately, Davis was so intent on despatch, that he made no more observations on the appearance of the men, whose names he called over as fast as he could gabble. But, with every effort, night came on before the

conclusion, and the last half-dozen he had to call over by the light of a lantern.

"Good heavens!" cried the mystified paymaster, as he raised his eyes from the muster-roll, "'tis quite dark. What on earth am I to do?"

"You had better get a chaise from the inn," I replied. "Run over, King, and order a chaise for Mr. Davis. They have one, I know, to my cost, for it broke down with me the other day, and nearly stopped my promotion."

"Thank you, my dear fellow," said the grateful paymaster. "'Twas a lucky thought; it quite escaped me, I'm so bewildered."

In a few minutes, Tom King returned, with intelligence that their only chaise was snowed-up three miles on the road to Rochdale.

"The post-boy has just returned, sir," said King, telling a very circumstantial lie, "and his nose is so frost-bitten, 'tis thought he'll lose it, poor fellow."

"Dear me! dear me!" cried Davis, wringing his hands, "I must ride, then."

"But if you should go astray, my dear friend, in the dark?" I suggested.

"True, true," said he, ruminating.

"Then, again," I observed, "those villainous Luddites know you to be the paymaster; and if they should fancy you have a money-bag, or a bundle of notes about you—"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" sighed poor Davis.

"A chance shot from behind a hedge," I said, "may kill Lucifer himself, according to the proverb."

"But, my dear fellow," gasped out the poor wretch, "can't you send a party of six men with me? One can lead my horse, you know, and the rest keep off the Luddites."

"What!" I exclaimed, "after they have been all night and all day crossing the country in every direction!"

"But some," said the cunning fellow, "havn't been out at all, you know."

"These," I replied, "I hold at the magistrate's disposal in the anticipated attack. It would be as much as my commission is worth, to part with a man of them."

Poor Davis threw himself down upon my bed, utterly exhausted in mind and body; till, at length, after turning over every expedient again and again, he finally concluded on stopping for the night as a choice of evils; entreating me, however, to order a party into the house for his especial protection, which I promised to do. After supper, when he had imbibed a sufficient quantity of Dutch courage, I showed him to his bed-room, the grim aspect of which made him shudder; and it was not till I had repeatedly assured him of protection against all dangers, that he ventured to creep under the bedclothes.

About two o'clock in the morning I gently opened Davis's room door, which, of course, had no lock to it; and igniting a bundle of damp shavings, I pushed it inside; this was succeeded by another,

and another, till the room was filled with a dense oppressive smoke, which soon affected the lungs of the sleeper, who began to cough violently, and to exclaim:—

“Bless my soul! I am choking! What can be the matter with me? How oppressive it is! What a smoke! I smell something burning. Oh Lord! the house is on fire! murder! murder!”

At that instant a tremendous explosion took place of squibs and crackers, reverberating like so many twenty-four pounders in the empty rooms overhead. This was succeeded by the hissing, spitting, and yelling of a dozen cats, in the midst of which the explosion had taken place; while two or three empty arm-chests came thundering down stairs, as if the whole house was falling to pieces. In a state of horror poor Davis jumped out of bed, bawling at the top of his lungs for assistance, and praying the gentlemen Luddites in his confusion, like Scrub in the play, to take his life and spare all he had. Bang! bang! went a dozen crackers at his bed side, while a blue light, sailing across the room, threw an unearthly glare on a variety of objects which, in the bewildered fancy of poor Davis, were either fiends or Luddites, and he screamed in actual frenzy “Murder! murder! save me! save me!”

At this moment I rushed into the room with a candle in one hand and a pistol in the other, and calling out to Davis to run for his life, I let the candle drop and fired off my pistol close to his ear; while a fresh explosion of crackers overhead, the renewed yelling of the cats, and the furious barking of the dogs, which were now giving tongue in full chorus, actually made an infernal din that would have frightened myself, if I had not known the nature of it.

“Oh! for Heaven’s sake,” cried Davis, “where is the door? Show me the door, for the sake of mercy!”

“Here it is,” I replied; “take my hand; there is the staircase; run for your life! the villains have come in at the top of the house; but we’re peppering them.”

Another tremendous explosion of crackers overhead confirmed my words; while the cats, driven to a state of frenzy, burst open the door of the room in which they were confined, but finding the skylights all closed, they charged down stairs in a body, at the heels of poor Davis, like a gang of fiends fresh from the regions of eternal fire.

How he got down without tumbling head over heels I can’t imagine; but down he got, bolted out of the front door, which was left open for the exit of the cats, and though he had literally nothing on but his shirt, he ran off in the snow, regardless of consequences, shouting “Murder! murder!” like a madman, through the streets of Oldham. He was at last overtaken half a mile off by Tom King and the orderly, whom I sent in search of him, with a couple of blankets. They conveyed him, shivering with cold, and groaning with horror, to the inn, where he was put to bed, wrapped up in blankets, with a bottle of hot water to his feet; and before I myself was up in the morning, he had departed for Rochdale.

I fear, however, I carried my vengeance too far against poor Davis, for he had an attack of quinsy, in consequence, that nearly cost him his life; and he soon after went on leave of absence, to avoid the anticipated bantering of his brother officers.

CHAPTER XII.

VOLUNTEERING.

SUCH, in brief, were the incidents of my early career: a period during which I certainly enjoyed life in its most attractive form; receiving on all hands a kind, considerate indulgence, which was, in some degree perhaps, due to my extreme youth and boyish habits. But a change now came over the spirit of my dream, and I was speedily hurried into the vicissitudes of foreign service; which, though differing in character from those I had already experienced, were even still more rife with amusing incident and picturesque variety.

Some of my readers, perhaps, will recollect the extensive volunteering from the militia to the line, which took place in the spring of 1809; and which enabled government not only to put Sir Arthur Wellesley at the head of a gallant army in Portugal, but also to send one of the finest armaments that ever left the shores of Great Britain to perish miserably in the swamps of Walcheren. This volunteering I had been long anxiously anticipating, as the only certain means of advancement in my profession: for I could not imagine any pursuit so preposterous as that of playing at soldiers in the militia, which seemed to be the utmost stretch of so many men's ambition; and though I dearly loved my charming mistress, yet so far was I from coveting her wealth, or speculating on enriching myself through her means, that I longed with intense ardour for an opportunity of distinguishing myself in the field, that I might, on the contrary, load her with riches and honour.

This opportunity now presenting itself, I eagerly turned it to account, by canvassing for volunteers amongst my detachment; and such was either their personal regard for me, or their real desire for foreign service, that every man of them declared his intention of going with me into the line. This was the flattering aspect of my affairs when the Oldham detachment was called in; and, with infinite joy, we marched out of that detestable hole, on a fine spring morning, for head-quarters.

Midway between Oldham and Rochdale, we halted at a public-house, where I ordered every man a pint of ale; and a travelling pedlar happening to pass, I purchased all the ribbons he had in his box, which I distributed amongst my volunteers, whose caps were speedily decorated with flaunting streamers. We then resumed our march; the bugle occasionally throwing out martial blasts before us,

or our fifer playing "The Girl I left behind me," that immortal melody, so redolent of tender recollections and martial inspiration.

Luckily, before we reached head-quarters, we met Captain Baker and another brother officer taking a ride. The former, a steady, good old fellow, whispered to me, "For heaven's sake, Percy, my boy, halt your men, and take those ribbons out of their caps, or you'll drive Sir George Cornwall distracted."

I accordingly halted my detachment, and walking aside with Baker, I asked him what he meant.

"My dear boy," he replied, "you fancy, perhaps, that these men are going with you to the line."

"Certainly," I replied, "they have all promised."

"You won't have one of them," said Baker.

"Why not?" I demanded in amazement.

"Can you imagine for a moment," he asked, "that Sir George, who has taken so much pains to make this regiment what it is, will suffer the loss of his very best men? or, that Lord Rodney can brook the idea of having his hobby of a crack company so completely knocked on the head, as to allow the *élite* of his Light Bobs to slip through his fingers in this way?"

"They may not, perhaps, like it," I said; "but how can they prevent it, if the men wish to go?"

"Oh! trust me," he replied, "that will not be difficult. There are many ways of damping this martial ardour, that you are not aware of; and a commanding officer has it always in his power to send to the line just the subjects he wishes to get rid of, and no others."

"You open my eyes to a chapter in volunteering," I said, "that gives me infinite pain; for I have become so well acquainted with these men, in this mock warfare of ours, that I really did hope to have the pleasure of leading them into the field of real service."

"There is no one of my acquaintance more capable of doing it," said Baker, to soothe my chafed spirit; "but take my advice, Percy, and let Sir George manage the matter his own way, for, at all events, you are sure of attaining the object of your ambition."

Thus, the splendid picture I had been so long feasting my imagination with, of future battles, at the head of my cherished Light Bobs, was knocked on the head; and I resumed the march of my detachment, shorn of their "blushing honours," in a desponding mood, to head-quarters.

But fortune, as if to make amends for this unexpected check, afforded me, soon after, at least a temporary glimpse of happiness; for, as we were descending into Rochdale, a travelling carriage, with imperials, and maid and footman in the rumble, came tearing up the road at full speed. It passed me like lightning; but I caught a glimpse of my dear Mary, who waved her handkerchief to me out of the window, and, either through accident or design, let it drop. I caught the dear missive before it reached the ground, and pressing it to my lips, buried it in my breast, close to my heart.

But an agonizing thought flashed, for an instant, across my brain.

Where could she be going to at such top-speed, and with every appearance of commencing a long journey? Could she be leaving Rochdale for ever? Pshaw! the idea was too ridiculous, but it was also exquisitely painful. It could only be for a short trip to Manchester, or to some friend's house in the neighbourhood. But I would soon learn the reality; and, somewhat reassured by my own hopeful suggestions, I marched my detachment to the barracks, reported my arrival personally to the commanding officer, and by the time I reached my own quarters, the first bugle was sounding for dinner.

My brother officers were all glad to see me again, and Foley cried out,—

“Come and sit by me, Mr. Blake; I want to catechise you somewhat stringently on the nature of your recent services.”

I accordingly took post by my worthy friend, who kept plying me with wine during dinner, as if he thought I wanted, or might in the course of the evening require, some stimulus of more than ordinary efficacy.

When the mess waiters had retired, I gave him a round, unvarnished tale of my late adventures. He was delighted with the factory hop, and the metamorphosis of Tom King; but I thought he would have gone into convulsions when I described the frightful adventure of the cats and crackers. All these doings I had to repeat for the general amusement; and great, indeed, were the explosions of laughter at the expense of poor Davis. The customary placid smile of Sir George Cornwall was heightened to a most unaristocratical broad-grin; and Lord Rodney, who invariably turned down his glass when he had taken his diurnal pint of wine, absolutely committed the debauch of a whole bottle, to enjoy the fun.

Unluckily, the young fellow whom I had met on the road with Baker in the morning, anxious to contribute his share of amusement *aux frais de la fête*, heedlessly asked Sir George, if he had seen the splendid recruiting party which marched into Rochdale that afternoon.

“No,” replied Sir George. “Have they commenced beating up in Rochdale?”

“Yes, Sir George,” replied young Roberts, “but not among the weavers though.”

“Where else can they find recruits in Lancashire?” demanded Sir George.

“Amongst the Apple-greens, to be sure,” replied Roberts.

“What, what, what?” cried Sir George, hastily. “What do you say, sir?”

Here this silly young man, in spite of Baker's signs, frowns, and winks, gave a ludicrous account of my volunteer exhibition, which caused an immediate explosion.

“Good gracious, Sir George,” cried Lord Rodney, “I must appeal to you to put a stop to such proceedings. I cannot suffer my company to be broken up in this manner with impunity.”

I never saw Sir George frown before, but he did on this occasion; and, fixing his eyes on me, he said,—

"I hope, Mr. Blake, you have not been tampering with the men."

"Sir George," I replied, somewhat chafed at the question, "I never tamper. I always go straight to my point, as becomes a gentleman; and if any one has a doubt on the subject, he knows how and when he may be satisfied."

"Mr. Blake, I must apologize," returned Sir George, with that delicate sense of honour he really entertained, "for having inadvertently used a term that was remote from my intention: but I must request you to state explicitly, whether you have spoken with the men of your detachment on the subject of volunteering."

"Unquestionably I have," I replied; "and I thought myself fully justified in so doing, until I was undeceived by my friend Baker."

"That is the simple fact, Sir George," added Baker; "the moment I hinted the irregularity of the proceeding, it was abandoned with the most praiseworthy alacrity."

"Oh! 'tis all a mistake," said Foley, "a muscicular abortion of Mr. Roberts's wit. My friend Blake is altogether incapable of doing anything disingenuous or clandestine."

"I am quite satisfied that it is so," returned Sir George. "But in fact, Mr. Blake has no occasion in the world to take any trouble in the matter. I undertake to send men enough to the line to insure him his commission; and I have this day received from the Horse Guards the numbers of six capital regiments from which he may make a selection."

This was, indeed, highly gratifying. I expressed my thanks for his kindness; and the numbers of the regiments being mentioned, my friends were all eager to assist me in making a good choice. After many *pourparlers*, I finally fixed on the Fifty-second; because, in the first place, it was a Light-Infantry regiment, and secondly, it was under orders for the Peninsula.

"This point being settled," resumed Sir George, "I propose to give Mr. Blake leave of absence from all parades and duties whatsoever till he is gazetted; that he may have full opportunity to revel in the field of Venus before he embarks in the field of Mars."

"And that," said Foley *sotto voce* to me, "reminds me of a point upon which I have been anxious to speak to you this evening."

"What, my dear colonel," I said gaily, "are you also about to abandon the ivy-crowned god, for the meretricious daughter of Neptune? To disclaim your '*Evoe Bacche!*' for the

" 'Bella Venere,
Che sola sei
Piacere degli uomini,
E degli Dei!'"

He looked, however, so grave on the matter, that my mind misgave me, and I awaited an explanation in breathless impatience.

"You are about to enter on a career," said Foley, "that will exact your undivided energy, both mental and physical."

"I trust," I said, "that I feel a just conviction of its importance."

"Of that," he replied, "I am fully assured, and therefore the sacrifice of other ties will come all the more easy to you."

"What on earth are you driving at, my dear friend?" I demanded.

"The affections of a young heart," continued Foley, with more feeling than I had ever thought he possessed, "cannot, perhaps, be all at once subdued; but they may, at least, be kept in abeyance, till time and the paramount calls of duty can in some degree soften the blow."

"The blow!" I exclaimed open-mouthed.

"You have not, then," he said, with a look of pity, "heard the news?"

"News!" I cried, "what news?"

"The Netherbys," he said, "are gone."

"Gone!" I cried with a shout, starting from my chair.

"Hush! hush!" said Foley, pressing me down again. "Don't betray yourself—be more a man! When old Netherby heard you were coming back, he sent them off to Bath, with orders, indeed, to fly to the ends of the earth to avoid you."

I had suffered greatly during the day; my ambition had been checked, my pride hurt, my hopes damped; and now the fondly-cherished bliss of my heart was crushed and trampled on. Words were rushing to my lips, struggling in vain for utterance; thoughts were racking my brain, feelings rending my heart—but the storm of contending passions found no vent, a stream of blood gushed from my nostrils, and I sank into a swoon upon the floor.

When I came to my senses, I found myself in bed, my left arm bandaged, where the doctor had breathed a vein, my head light, my thoughts confused, and Foley, with three or four kind-hearted fellows, sitting by my side.

When at length I began to recollect all that had occurred, I felt in my left breast; but, finding all vacant there, I began to fumble about the bed-clothes, as if in search of something. Foley, who saw what I wanted, unlocked my table-drawer, took out a small parcel, nicely folded in silver paper, and put it into my hand, whispering at the same time,—

"This dropped out when they were undressing you. I saw the initials, and, guessing the secret, put it safely by for you."

I warmly pressed his hand, while the tears started to my eyes; and I placed the precious relic, the last token of my lost Mary, on my heart, where it lay for three years, till I lost it—and my life nearly with it—at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo.

In a few days I was about once more, and having no military duties to perform, I should have enjoyed my liberty, but she who would have made that and every other good tenfold sweet to my heart, was nowhere to be found. It was in vain that I visited in succession, and repeatedly, every family, every spot, where I had once enjoyed her dear company, now hallowed in my thoughts as the shrine in the desert to the pilgrim, though deprived of its presiding deity. Society at length became hateful to me; I plunged into the country,

lonely and sad, and rambled over moss and mountain, venting my sighs to the unconscious wind, or indulging in day-dreams of future glory and happiness with the loadstar to which my thoughts invariably reverted.

But, alas! she was gone for ever, and once more were my affections doomed to be blighted. The reader may, perhaps, be disposed to impugn my fidelity, for thus transferring these affections so lightly from one to another; but, at least, he will do me the justice to say that I really had no choice in the matter, and that I was by no means a willing deserter. Neither could it be correctly called a transfer of affection from Harriet to Mary, for Heaven is my witness that I loved them both sincerely, even after I had lost them. This, indeed, is so truly the case, that if ever I am tempted to invent a new religion, it shall so far resemble Mahommed's, that in my Paradise we shall meet again the pretty girls we have loved in this nether sphere, and espouse them all; whether individually, or collectively, in distinct and separate portions of bliss, or embodied in one form and spirit with varied attractions, I leave for future consideration. The latter, perhaps, would be most conducive to the peace and unanimity of the domestic hearth.

But, hurrah! Mars armipotent beckons to the field, and Venus no longer Victrix, must strike her silken flag of dalliance. I am gazetted! "Lieutenant Blake, from the Hereford regiment of militia, to be Ensign in the 52nd, or Oxfordshire regiment of Light Infantry." Bravo! bravissimo! Ah! let Cobden and Elihu Burrit broach their peace doctrines, and twine their sandy rope of universal brotherhood round the ever-shifting mass of humanity, antagonistic in principle and discordant in material, but still there is something all-absorbing in the excitement of glorious war—soul-elevating in the clash of arms: and whether it be "the divinity that stirs within us," or the impulse of the fiend urging us on to the work of destruction, the effect is still the same; for, if a man have but a heart as big as a hazel-nut, it is sure to expand with a throb of triumph on the field of battle.

A few days before I left Rochdale, Foley came into my room, and said, in his usual playful manner:—

"Percy, my boy, I have something to say to you, if you promise not to call me out, for you Irishmen are always taking the bull by the wrong horn."

"My dear colonel," I replied, "the promise is so utterly needless, that I must decline the restriction."

"Well," said my excellent friend, "here is a bit of rag that I found lying idle in the corner of an old pocket-book; it may be of some use to you in your present undertaking, and it is of none in the world to me."

The bit of rag was a Bank of England note for fifty pounds!

"And Rodney," he continued, "Thomas Harley, I mean—for though George is an excellent fellow in the main, he wants every stiver to keep up his dig;—Rodney desired me to say that he has a flimsy exactly like it, which you can send your *alter idem*, Tom King,

for, any moment you please. He would have sent it by me; but he is deuced shy, to use his favourite term, of Irish pride."

"My excellent friend!" I replied, "I have received a remittance this morning from my father, which is more than adequate to my present requirements; for, after all, I am not a fellow of expensive habits, putting my three hobbies out of the question."

"Oh! that confounded fiddle!" exclaimed Foley, with a ghastly reminiscence of my Corelli exercises. "Often have I wished you in the celestial regions, singing Hosannahs with that thundering savage, Handel."

"Therefore," I resumed, "there is not the slightest occasion for this munificence on the part of yourself and the excellent major, which I beg permission to decline with the deepest gratitude; but if you will give me this little shirt-pin, I'll wear it, as a *souvenir* of your friendship, when I open the ball in the first action of the Oxfordshire Light Bobs."

And thus I parted with the dear old "Apple-greens," a gentlemanly and a brotherly band, which, in all my experience, I have never seen surpassed, and but seldom equalled.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FLOATING BIVOUAC.

I JOINED my new regiment at Ipswich; but, unfortunately, it was a second battalion just embodied, through which I had to work up before I could become effective in the first, which was then in the Peninsula, one of the crack regiments of the Light Division.

I was, however, in a fair way of seeing service somewhere or other very soon; for fresh rumours of war were multiplying hourly, and immense preparations making throughout the kingdom for the coming struggle. We were all strangers to each other in my new regiment, some having been promoted into it from the line, and others, like myself, appointed to it from the militia. We soon, however, got shaken into our places, and began to feel as if we had long been friends and companions. But it was some time before I forgot the dear old "Apple-greens;" not only on account of their own real, sterling worth, but for the association of ideas, dear to my heart, inseparably connected with them.

We had four or five thousand men in garrison at Ipswich, including a fine heavy cavalry regiment of the German legion; and drills, parades, and field days, following each other in rapid succession, led to the very natural inference that foreign service was not far distant. In the midst of all this bustle, however, amusement was not forgotten. Exclusive of plays, cricketing, races, and race-balls, we had a weekly garrison concert in which I was enrolled, amongst other amateurs; and on such occasions, when we had played out our pro-

gramme, seats and music-stands were removed, and a pleasant dance always concluded the evening.

At length, the order for service arrived; and one universal feeling of joy pervaded all those young hearts that were now panting for the field. We were not, as yet, acquainted with our destination, but there was a general impression that it was not, at all events, the Peninsula; a circumstance which, at the time, excited but little regret; for the paramount importance of the Spanish war was by no means so generally felt then, as it ought to have been, in England.

We marched, at length, for Harwich; and, by the time we arrived there, the secret of our destination had partly oozed out. It was, in fact, the ill-fated Walcheren expedition, the finest that ever left the shores of Great Britain; consisting of forty thousand land troops, besides a noble fleet of thirty-nine sail of the line and thirty-six frigates, with innumerable gun-boats, bomb-vessels, and transports.

The object of this armament was the occupation of Flushing, with the destruction of the French ships, arsenals, and dockyards, at Antwerp; and, by these means, to create a powerful diversion in favour of Austria, then vigorously pressed by Buonaparte, after his triumphs at Abensburg, Landshut, and Eckmuhl, prior to the decisive battle of Wagram. The period was certainly critical: and the fortune of that disastrous campaign might have been changed, had our enterprise succeeded, as it ought to have done. But the unhappy dissensions between the earl of Chatham, our commander-in-chief, and Admiral Sir Richard Strachan, who commanded the fleet, totally defeated the great object for which this immense armament was got together; and some thousands of brave soldiers were thus doomed to perish miserably from malaria, in the swamps of that little molehill, on which they had scarcely more than standing-room. But let me not anticipate.

This enormous fleet and army sailed in two divisions for the coast of Holland, on the 28th and 29th of July, 1809. Our regiment, which formed part of the second division, had been embarked for several days, and we were thus, in some degree, reconciled to the transport, if anything can be said to reconcile sentient beings to so deplorable a state of existence.

Let the reader then fancy, if he can, an old tub of a collier, employed for the last thirty years in the Newcastle trade; ill-built, ugly, confined, inconvenient, adapted for nothing in the world but carrying coals, and altogether inadequate for the purpose to which it was now devoted. The cabin, in which twelve or fifteen gentlemen of liberal education, refined habits, and aspiring hopes, were to stow themselves as best they might, was about ten feet by eight, very low, confined, gloomy, ill-ventilated; with an over-powering aroma of tar, rotten cheese, onions, garlic, rusty bacon, salt fish, and a variety of other undefinable smells, enough to drive any one distracted who possessed olfactory nerves of the least possible sensibility.

Then the various noises that constantly broke upon the ear; the grinding of the rudder at every pull of the tiller-rope, the creaking of bulkheads, the swaying of the mizen boom, the flapping of wet

sails, the eternal hauling of ropes, the cries of the sailors, the stamping on the deck, together with the cursing, swearing, scolding, shouting, bellowing, and blaspheming of the captain (save the mark!) an ignorant, ill-tempered, and insolent sea-going monster. All these formed a never-ending chorus with the kindred horrors of wind and waves, which made every one of us eager to jump at any land-perils or privations that might offer themselves, merely to escape the literal *Inferno*, where we were now "cribbed, cabined, and confined;" very little better, I imagine, than so many negroes bound from the Gold Coast to that especial land of liberty, the United States.

After striking on a sand-bank off Land-guard Fort, and bumping there for an hour or two, we at length fairly got to sea, and arrived the following day in the Room-Pot, as the Dutch call that portion of the Scheldt's capacious mouth wherein Walcheren and its congeries of sub-aqueous neighbours are situated. Here we came to anchor, and preparations were made for landing; the men were paraded on deck; knapsacks, arms, and accoutrements put in order; and three days' provisions cooked and stowed away in the mess-tins, the havresacks receiving the biscuit, and the round wooden canteens the allowance of rum. Nor did the officers disdain these humble accoutrements, but furnished themselves in a similar manner with creature comforts for the approaching bivouac.

The main body of the French army of occupation being concentrated in the fortified city of Flushing, we landed without opposition at the town of Terveer; the small garrison of which had been driven out the day before by the 71st and 85th, forming a part of the first division of our army. It was the 1st of August, and a beautiful evening, when we got on shore, all eager for our first lesson in actual warfare; and towards nightfall we were marched in the direction of Middleburg, the capital, a couple of miles beyond which we were to take up our alignment.

Our progress, though slow, was fatiguing, from our long confinement on board ship; and the weather being excessively warm, we were soon covered with dust and perspiration. Our advance, however, was uninterrupted by the enemy, till we got nearly within range of the guns at Flushing; and then, occasionally, a spent eighteen or twenty-four pounder would bury itself in the ground, near our line of march; or, after striking the earth, go bounding over the head of the column. Occasionally, also, a party of jolly tars would come along, singing and huzzaing as they dragged after them heavy guns for our breaching batteries; cracking jokes with our men as we opened out to make way for the "say-horses," as Pat called them: and sometimes, also, a waggon with wounded soldiers would meet us from the opposite direction, on its way to the hospital at Middleburg; a significant indication of the glory that lay before us.

These little incidents served to beguile the road, till, at length, we arrived at our position; which, like the rest of the island, was a dead flat, intersected by wide ditches filled with water to the brim. The quarter and rear guards being established, under the guidance of a staff officer, and sentinels posted, we bivouacked in open column as

we stood: arms were piled, knapsacks unslung, haversacks, mess-tins, and canteens brought into requisition, and all supped heartily, in the highest glee at the novelty of our situation, for we were still very young soldiers; sharing good-humouredly our respective prog, and cracking jokes on the round-shot from Flushing, which now and then shattered the stones and branches of the trees in our immediate vicinity. We at length stretched our weary bodies on the sod, and were speedily in the lap of "nature's soft nurse," dreaming of anything but "imminent peril in the deadly breach."

We had not, however, been very long in this happy state of oblivion, when a shout suddenly arose, mingled with oaths, imprecations, and bursts of wild laughter, which effectually broke our heavy slumber, and made us imagine we were beset by ten thousand fiends. My first impression, on coming to my senses, and finding myself, nearly covered with some fluid, the colour of which I could not distinguish, was that our whole division had been suddenly massacred by some diabolical stratagem of the enemy, and that I was actually swimming in a sea of blood.

But the now fast-advancing daylight speedily undeceived me, and, to my exceeding great comfort, I found that it was nothing but water, in which we were all splashing, floundering and disappearing one after another, in ditches and gullies; whilst every one, as he emerged from the mysterious element, was hailed with shouts of laughter by his reckless companions.

It then occurred to me that the landing had been all a dream, and that we had been wrecked on some horrible shoal or sand-bank, at the mouth of the Scheldt; though I could not satisfactorily account for the presence of trees and bushes, and occasional farm-houses peeping between. At length, with some difficulty, having got out of this unaccountable dilemma, we scrambled on to the main road, which was raised above the surrounding fields; and then the enigma was solved by some of our Dutch guides. The island of Walcheren, it seems, being many feet under the level of the sea at high water, is surrounded by an artificial embankment: this being cut through in several places by the French, to accommodate us with a bath, after our dusty march, the ditches, with which the whole island is intersected, overflowed their banks, and occasioned the unheard-of catastrophe I have just related.

The pioneers of the brigade were now immediately mustered; and these being assisted by numerous fatigue parties, canals and drains were speedily cut in all directions, to let off our unwelcome visitant into some lower grounds in the vicinity; by which means in a few hours it had so far subsided, that we were enabled to take up our encampment. Meanwhile, under the influence of a brilliant sun (for the Low Countries), our dripping garments were dried upon our backs, and we set to, with redoubled energy, to build huts for ourselves, of the young trees in a neighbouring plantation; while some foraging parties brought in sundry bundles of hay and straw, with which we made excellent beds for the night, though not without many a misgiving of another swimming-bath.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NIGHT IN THE TRENCHES.

THE city of Flushing was now regularly invested by sea and land; the great energies of "the late" Lord Chatham, as we called him, from his dilatory habits, being drowsily devoted to the work, as if the capture of so comparatively unimportant a place had been the sole object of this stupendous enterprise. He was ably seconded by Admiral Sir Richard Strachan, who, when it came to the push, found himself so deplorably ignorant of the channel of the Scheldt, that the precious time of his officers and men was frittered away in taking soundings and laying down buoys, when he ought to have been dismantling the French ships at Antwerp and conveying us to the proper sphere of action before the enemy had time to improve his defences, and ultimately to baffle the real object of the expedition.

Flushing, however, instead of being masked and passed by, was to be regularly besieged, bombarded, and captured, before another step could be taken to relieve our friends the Austrians, who were falling daily in thousands before the lightning speed and gigantic footsteps of the Man of Destiny. Our engineers accordingly broke ground, and working parties and outlying pickets were the order of the day. Great, indeed, was then the bustle and excitement amongst us; one half of the besieging force being employed, with very few intermissions of rest, on outlying picket, within pistol-shot of the enemy's tirailleurs; covering themselves as well as they could behind bushes and stumps of trees, or stretched in the damp trenches, laying in a stock of rheumatism and ague for the amusement of winter quarters; the other half was occupied, unarmed and in fatigue dress, in manufacturing fascines and gabions, and filling sandbags for the formation of breaching batteries, and in conveying the same upon their shoulders from the lines to the trenches; getting knocked over in their progress by twos and threes, under what military writers are pleased to call the *galling* operation of grape shot and rifle-balls.

During the siege, the French made frequent sorties in the night-time to retard the progress of the works we were throwing up against the town, which often produced sanguinary combats between the besieged and our outlying pickets; and on these occasions, when anything serious was likely to occur, the whole besieging force was generally turned out to meet contingencies. I shall never forget my last night in the trenches; not only from the novelty and excitement of the scene, but from a serio-comic incident which happily intervened to enliven the monotony of this otherwise disagreeable duty.

Captain Tomkins, of ours, who commanded the picket of which I was one of the subalterns, was equally inexperienced in actual warfare with the rest of us: though, in virtue of his rank, he made great pretensions to generalship in choosing a good position, whence we

could observe the motions of the enemy and shelter ourselves at the same time from those confounded long shots which so startled the cooing courage of Bob Acres.

Our position was in a damp and muddy ditch, overshadowed on the side next the enemy by a screen of willows, through which we peeped eagerly into the palpable obscure, in expectation every moment of getting a rifle-ball through the brain, or a bayonet through the body. Fortunately, a party of sailors, who had been employed in dragging up some 24-pounders for the seven-gun battery, had forgotten to carry off the main-sail of their long-boat, which they had brought with them for some purpose or other. This we seized upon as a spoil of war; and laying it under us in the wet ditch, we wrapped it about our legs to make ourselves cozy, while we ate our supper of junk beef and biscuit, and passed the canteen from one to another, indulging in occasional reminiscences of feather-beds and savoury viands, with other creature comforts of the *casa paterna*.

Meanwhile, the scene around was one that kept us effectually on the *qui vive*, in spite of those drowsy indications which nature gave of exhausted strength and weary watching. Every now and then a rifle-ball whistled past our ears; or a round-shot from the ramparts of the beleaguered city came bounding over us, shattering the willow-trees in its remorseless passage; or a shell winging its way, like a revolving star, in a threatening parabola, and either bursting innocuously over our heads, or plunging into the earth, and scattering on every side fragments of rocks and soil in its fearful explosion.

In our front, at a distance of two hundred yards, lay the enemy's pickets, ensconced, like ourselves, behind hedges, and keeping up a desultory fire on our position; shots from each side telling at intervals, and eliciting a yell or a groan from the luckless recipients: while in a distant part of the line a long and angry roar of musketry would indicate an attack on a working party, or the repulse of a sortie from the town. These agreeable incidents, as my readers may suppose, kept our nervous system in a state of perpetual tension, and made us all long heartily for the dispersion of those deep nocturnal shadows which cast a mysterious and threatening aspect over the gloomy scene.

Such was the feverish state of excitement in which we were, when, about an hour before daybreak, one of our advanced sentinels, having discharged his musket and retired, as usual in such cases, informed Captain Tomkins that three huge, dark-looking objects were seen advancing from the town. The matter, indeed, appeared of such serious and pressing emergency, that Tomkins, without waiting to sift the accuracy of his information, instantly sent a report to the division head-quarters that three heavy columns of infantry were advancing in sortie, and the whole line was consequently turned out, immediate and general action being considered inevitable.

Fortunately, however, for us poor souls, who would have been the first victims of this "untoward event," it proved to be a false alarm; upon which General Acland, who was brigadier of the day, rode

out to the advanced posts, in a towering passion. He instantly ordered Captain Tomkins to parade his picket in front of their position, careless of their exposure to the enemy; for daylight was then somewhat advanced, and round shot from the ramparts of Flushing were flying about us too thick to be pleasant; attracted, no doubt, by the glittering of the muskets, which, in those days, were not "done brown," as at present.

My readers are aware, from what I have already said, that it is sharp work for the eyes on outlying picket, in front of an active enemy; and that the apparition even of a single individual is apt to draw a dozen shots about his ears. It must, therefore, have been a matter of great moment that could induce a general officer to expose both himself and a whole platoon to the risk of a murderous fire. Tomkins accordingly felt the critical nature of his position, and even had some misgivings about a drum-head court-martial on the spot, for his false alarm. Judge, then, his astonishment, when the general addressed him with the utmost coolness and deliberation in the following manner:—

"Captain Tomkins, did you ever hear the story of the three crows?"

"Good gracious, sir!" replied the bewildered Tomkins, "I never did."

"Then, sir, I'll tell it you," said the general, taking a pinch of snuff with all the nonchalance of a hackneyed *raconteur*. "Once upon a time, Captain Tomkins, a sick man dreamt that he had swallowed a black crow—"

Here an 18-pound shot from the ramparts tore up the earth at the heels of the general's charger, and went *ricocheting* over the heads of the picket; but he proceeded undisturbed as follows:—

"Steady, men! no movement in the ranks. Though round shot generally kills, it isn't always sure to hit. This sick man, Captain Tomkins, having told his dream to a friend, that friend told it to another, with this improvement, however, that his poor, dear, sick friend had actually swallowed a black crow!"

A shell, which followed the eighteen-pounder, at this moment lodged midway between me and the general; and, partly burying itself in the earth, exploded with a loud crash, scattering rocks and rubbish around in all directions.

"Good heavens, sir!" cried Tomkins, venturing to interrupt the story-teller; "there's a man struck down in the ranks!"

"Well, sir!" exclaimed the imperturbable general, "did you never see a man struck down in the ranks before? Let him be carried to the rear, sir; and listen, if you please, to the sequel of my story. The sick man's friend, who may be compared to your sentry, Captain Tomkins, having told the marvellous tale of the black crow to a greater fool than himself, who may be likened, Captain Tomkins, to you; the latter immediately magnified the wonder into three black crows, with which he horrified every one that would listen to him.

"Now, had you, Captain Tomkins, had the coolness to inquire into this matter before you had recourse to so serious a measure as turn-

ing out the whole line, you would have discovered that the three weighty columns, or black crows, which haunted your imagination, were nothing more than two drunken men and a pig! The men were made prisoners, and the pig was shot by a hungry rifleman. You may now turn in your picket, Captain Tomkins, and I sincerely hope I may never have the pleasure of being on duty with you again, sir."

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROVOST MARSHAL.

THE readers of heroic romance, who are so accustomed, in the pages of Tasso and Ariosto, to rich pavilions and snowy-tented fields, will doubtless be disgusted at my humble description of our Walcheren encampment; but, bad as it was, I have been in worse since then. Indeed, in all my campaigns, I cannot be fairly said ever to have slept under canvas till I went to the gorgeous East; and there, as my friend Jack Dillon remarked, canvas is cotton. But of this, and of Dillon also, more hereafter.

The weather being fine and warm, very few of our soldiers took the trouble to build huts to shelter them, preferring rather to throw themselves down on the bare earth, when their day's work was done, and sleep in the open air: and though Flushing kept us humbugging for one-and-twenty days with open trenches, there never was a more healthy army during that period, though they certainly paid for it afterwards.

The officers, on the contrary, being more luxuriously inclined, built huts for themselves according to their respective fancies, but without much attention to symmetry, or due order of alignment: the materials which surrounded us on every side were simply the boughs and branches of trees, interwoven with luxuriant foliage, flowering shrubs, straw, &c., as convenience dictated; architectural design, or tasteful ornament, being studied only by a select few, of whom I happened to be one.

In the construction of my hut, chance had befriended me; for Tomkins and I having shared between us the sail mentioned in my last chapter, I was enabled thereby to add to my ordinary sleeping-butt a splendid verandah, or rather saloon, of canvas stretched horizontally on half-a-dozen upright posts, which effectually shaded us from the sun. I also manufactured a rough sort of table, and two or three seats, out of some old boards that were found for me by my servant, Conolly, a raw Irish recruit, but a singular compound of cunning and simplicity.

Mr. Conolly, by the way, was rather famous at finding things that nobody ever seemed to have lost, for nobody ever came to claim them; and though strict orders were issued, forbidding everything in the shape of plunder, and making unpleasant allusions to the provost

marshal, he scarcely ever returned from a rural walk without bringing something or other useful or ornamental in our simple *ménage*. One article, amongst others, was a cuckoo-clock, which he set up in a small hut that he had built for himself adjoining mine; and there his great delight was to make it strike all sorts of hours in rapid succession, for the purpose of hearing the "Cuckoo! cuckoo!" and wondering at the mystic spirit that gave it utterance.

My grand marquee soon became an object of general attraction; and almost every one of ours brought his wine or his grog there after dinner, to have a smoke and a chat, as at a regimental or garrison club. Indeed, it was generally denominated "Blake's Club House;" and even strangers from other regiments gave their friends the *rendez-vous* there, being always sure of a hospitable reception.

As the characters of my new brother officers opened upon me, I began to like them exceedingly; for, though I did not find in them quite so much polish as in the dear old "Apple-greens," yet, there was a degree of manly fervour and unaffected good-fellowship about them, which harmonized delightfully with my own temperament. Many of them were old officers, possessing brevet rank beyond their regimental: amongst others was Sontag; who, though a full colonel in the service, yet, from a restless disposition and a love of change, he had only attained the regimental rank of captain. In the army, more, perhaps, than anywhere else, the proverb holds that "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

Sontag was an eccentric fellow, and a humourist; very slovenly in his person, and careless in his habits, but excessively touchy on points of dignity or precedence, and particularly stringent in exacting from the private soldier unbounded obedience and respect. He used to sing a droll song for us, occasionally: and one evening, especially, he volunteered his favourite ditty, when we mustered pretty strong:—every man with his meerschaum in hand, and his tumbler of punch before him; replenished, when necessary, from a fine large china soup-tureen, which had been *found* by Mr. Conolly; he, the said Conolly, standing, on the present occasion, a little in the rear, to be ready when wanted.

Silence being proclaimed by a loud noise of knocking on the table, our worthy colonel began his song; at the same time gracefully waving the soup-ladle, as Jullien waves his magic baton before the dazzled eyes of his wondering auditors:—

I.

Fair Marian sat in her maiden bower,
As the bell of the castle was tolling the hour.
Hi calloo, calisti, calan!
Su-san was a little old man,
Su-san was a little old man.

II.

There came an old trooper riding by,
And at the young maiden he cocked his eye,
Hi calloo, calisti, calan! etc.

III.

But the wind was high and the wind was strong.
And it blew like a bellows both loud and long :
Hi calloo, calisti, calan ! etc.

IV.

Till it tore the trees all up by the roots,
And blew the trooper out of his boots.
Hi calloo,—

“Haw! haw! haw” shouted Conolly, unable any longer to suppress the laughter with which he was bursting.

“You scoundrel!” cried the colonel, turning round in a rage; “how dare you laugh?”

“Holy Mary!” exclaimed Conolly, “wouldn’t you make the very pigs laugh, colonel, dear!”

Up jumped Sontag, and rushed at Conolly, to annihilate him with the soup-ladle; but the delinquent being too nimble for him, slipped under his arm, and ran for his life. The colonel flew after him, determined, with his own hand, to chastise so gross a breach of discipline; and then ensued a chase-royal, which very soon attracted every one to the scene of action: Conolly doubling on his pursuer, and running a figure of eight amongst huts, or diving under horses’ bellies, while the colonel would occasionally trip against and overturn a stand of arms, or upset a cooking-pot, and scatter the fire to the four winds; peals of laughter and shouts of encouragement echoing far and near.

Sontag at length overtook the fugitive, close to one of the ditches, and broke the soup-ladle on his bare head; but Conolly sprang to the other side, and the colonel, unable to control the impetus of his pursuit, tumbled headlong in, while a universal roar of merriment shook the very heavens. We fished out poor Sontag at last, looking like a river-god, with all his sedges about him; but nobody laughed more heartily than he himself did, at the ludicrous exhibition he had made.

I was on picket with the colonel, a few days after, when he said to me,—

“How is it, Blake, that your man Friday hasn’t mounted picket with you to-day?”

“I got him excused,” I replied, “having something for him to do in the cleaning way.”

“I’m glad of it,” said Sontag, with a chuckle. “That will just do; I’ll hang him this very evening.” Here he began to walk backwards and forwards, rubbing his hands—his usual custom when in a state of excitement—and laughing heartily at the drollery of his own conceptions.

“Well,” I observed, “you are the first merry hangman I have ever met with.”

“I owe it to the fellow,” said Sontag, still laughing, “for the trick he played me the other day. I’ll have him before the provost marshal this very evening.”

This announcement, I confess, somewhat startled me; for, after all, Conolly's peccadilloes were but trivial, and it seemed a harsh measure of revenge to subject him to so summary and severe a tribunal.

"Don't be alarmed, Percy, my boy," said the colonel: "'tis all *morrogha*, as they say in Ireland—nothing but blank cartridge and sham fight. Joe Blow, one of my company, who is about the ugliest fellow in the division, will make a capital provost. I'll dress him up in a wig and cocked hat, and we'll have a regular trial of the delinquent—that is, if you have no objection."

"Not the least in the world," I said; "indeed, I think a little fright may do him good, and save him, perhaps, from the provost marshal in reality."

"Not a doubt of it," returned Sontag, who laughed like a child at his anticipated fun. "We have a quiet, retired picket-house here, if you will only send for him."

"I expect him out in the evening," I said, "with some things from camp, and I will then submit him to your discretion."

Accordingly, about night-fall, Mr. Conolly ventured to come out to the trenches—for he was almost as great a coward as Davis himself; and, while he was actually describing a nice little copper skillet he had found by the road-side, that would do beautifully to stew mushrooms in, a corporal and a file of the picket marched up and summoned him to appear before the provost marshal.

A deadly paleness overspread poor Conolly's face: his limbs shook as if he had the palsy; and, falling on his knees, he besought me, with tears in his eyes, to save him from the clutches of that awful functionary.

"Oh, masther Percy! masther Percy!" he exclaimed, "for your mother's sowl, don't let me go before the provo."

"I cannot prevent it," I replied. "He has his orders from the commander-in-chief direct, and no one can interfere with him."

Thus, finding I could not assist him, he was compelled to accompany his guards, weeping all the way, and supplicating them to let him escape. At length he was ushered into a room that was dimly lighted by a single candle, where the provost marshal was seated, with a cocked hat and a tow wig, manufactured for the occasion; while on each side of him were ranged four or five of the picket, dressed up as executioners, with cat-o'-nine-tails and pioneers' axes in their hands. The door and windows were crowded with others, who had stolen out of the trenches to see the fun; and, altogether, it had a dismal look, calculated to frighten a culprit of stronger nerves than poor Conolly, who fell on his knees the moment he entered.

"Stand up, and give an account of yourself," said the judge with a stern voice.

"Yes, your honour," replied Conolly, in a whimpering tone, as he obeyed the order.

"I understand you have a cuckoo-clock in your possession," said the judge.

"Is it me, sir?" said Conolly. "Where on earth should I get such a thing as a cuckoo-clock, your honour?"

"That's what I want to know," said the judge, with a frown and a squint of the most ominous description.

"Faix, then," returned Conolly, "it's myself that can't tell you. Sure I never seen sich a thing in all my life."

"Do you see these cats and hatchets?" demanded the judge with a terrible glance.

"Ye—ye—yes, my lord," stammered the culprit, as they were flourished before his eyes.

"Then I ask you, by virtue of the oath you have taken," shouted the judge, "or woe be to your sinful body, how you came by that cuckoo-clock."

"Then it's from a pedlar I bought it one day, sir," replied Conolly.

"Where was that?" demanded the judge.

"Forenint the dure of the masther's tint," replied Conolly.

"That's false!" cried the judge, with a frown. "Pedlars are not allowed to enter the camp."

"Sure, 'twas outside the camp I bought it, your honour," said Conolly.

"You just now told me," cried the judge, "that it was at the door of your master's tent. Did you take the tent outside with you, then?"

"Ov coorse I did," replied Conolly, getting bewildered in his cross-examination.

"What did you do with the tent after that?" demanded the judge.

"I left it where it was," said the culprit; "what would you have me do with it?"

"And what did you do with the clock?" demanded the provost marshal.

"I tuk it home with me," said Conolly.

"Then the tent was in one place," observed the judge, "and the clock in another?"

"Jest so, sir," replied the culprit.

"And where were they both when you got home?" asked the judge.

"They were both together," replied Conolly.

"Was that inside or outside, or on both sides of the camp?" demanded the judge, with a thundering voice.

"Then the divil a one ov me can tell," said Conolly. "Your honour has so bothered me intirely, that I don't know whether I'm standin' on my head or my heels, this blessed minute."

"Oh, it's a clear case," said the provost marshal. "'Tis flat forgery and *felo-de-se* by the 99th article of war, which declares that he who steals a clock, especially a cuckoo clock, is to receive five hundred lashes."

"Oh, murther!" cried Conolly, lifting up his clasped hands. "I wish I was up to my neck in the bog of Allen."

"The same article," continued the judge, "further declares that he who would steal a clock, wouldn't hesitate to steal a cock."

"Is it me, your honour?" cried the too conscious Conolly. "Divil resaise the cock did I ever steal in all my born days, your honour."

"What is that peeping out from the breast of your great coat?" demanded the judge.

Every eye was directed to the spot indicated by the sharp-witted Joe Blow, where the head of a fine young cock was just visible, peering out between two of the wide-set buttons of Conolly's great coat. But, as if this was not enough, the moment chanticleer saw the light of the candle, he set up a lusty crow that made the hall of justice ring again.

"There's evidence against you, you thief!" exclaimed the judge, shaking his tow wig and cocked hat. "You and the cock shall go to pot together, so down on your marrow-bones, and say your Padheren-Avy."

"Oh, the Lord have mercy on my sinful sowl!" cried poor Conolly, in his tribulation. "Oh, colonel dear, won't you pray for me, and you peeping in there at the window. Sure av I did laugh at the song, every one else did the same; an if you tumbled into the ditch, 'twasn't all along ov me, but the fault of your own bandy legs."

"Silence in the court," cried the judge, "while I pass the sentence."

"On the neck ov your mother's sowl," cried the culprit, "give me a long day, your honour?"

"Do you see that beam over your head?" sternly demanded the judge.

Conolly cast a rueful glance up at the roof-trees.

"In five minutes more," said the judge, "you'll dangle at that beam, where you may dance upon nothing, and show your steps to the mob, before you go out of this dirty world."

Totally overcome by this direful sentence, poor Conolly fell groaning upon the floor; but at this critical juncture the farce was suddenly cut short by a dozen shots outside the picket-house, while a sentry shouted, in a voice of thunder, "Sortie! sortie! Picket, turn out!"

"What on earth is a salt-eel?" cried Conolly.

But, before he could have an answer, judges, executioners, and spectators, were tumbling over each other in headlong haste to get into the trenches, where, in three minutes more, we were wrapped in a blaze of musketry that drove Conolly and his cuckoo-clock totally out of our heads.

It was, in fact, a sortie of some consequence, the object being to destroy one of our breaching batteries, and spike the guns, but it totally failed; for though, in consequence of the darkness, there was more noise than mischief in the affair, the enemy were repulsed as day began to dawn, and driven back, leaving about twenty killed and wounded behind them on the field.

When all was quiet, I returned to the picket-house, where I found poor Conolly in a paroxysm of fever, from the double fright he had undergone. I sent a fatigue party with him immediately to the hospital, whither he went, raving of the salt-eel and the provost marshal; and it was not till his head was shaved and blistered, and the doctor had put him through a course of black draughts and croton-tiglum, that he was at length restored to his senses. The joke was a severe one, but it served as a salutary lesson, for Mr. Conolly never after got into the clutches of the provost marshal.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUTCH VROW.

ONE of the standing jokes of that very "slow" period of which I am now treating, was, that Lord Chatham could never after hear the subject of his expedition broached, without a flushing in the face; and the following epigram, written on the occasion, gives too true a picture of the ridiculous state of affairs, to claim even the merit of poetical invention——

"Lord Chatham, with his sabre drawn,
Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan;
Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham."

But though slow, and by no means sure, seemed the maxim of our commanders, nothing could surpass the zeal, energy, and enterprising spirit of the troops composing this noble expedition. The same animus inspired both men and officers; and in spite of the disheartening circumstances under which they laboured, the universal feeling was, like that of the gallant Scotchman, how they could best kill "twa at a blow!"

So many years had elapsed since the troops of England had seen anything like active service, and the expedition comprised so many raw soldiers, who had never seen a shot fired in anger, that much could not fairly be expected from their efforts in this their first campaign. And yet the facility with which they comprehended and performed its various and unwonted duties, was truly wonderful: trenches being dug, fascines and gabions manufactured, and batteries erected, with the utmost excellence and rapidity, by men who, ten days before, had never seen or heard of either one or the other.

By these means the siege works soon made a rapid progress; the line of circumvallation was completed, several formidable batteries erected, and our battering train nearly got into position. Our incessant activity kept us all in excellent health and spirits; and the vicinity of Middleburg, though we were not allowed to partake of its amusements, afforded a constant supply of little luxuries, to enable us to relish and eke out our rations. Being the only one in the regiment who spoke French with any fluency, I was generally requested by my brother officers to be their purveyor when camp supplies began to fail; a piece of service which, of course, I always rendered with pleasure.

The last time I paid a visit of this kind to Middleburg, before the surrender of Flushing, was on a fine afternoon about the middle of August. Followed by my two fatigue-men, with hampers on their backs, I passed the Stadthaus, and strolled down the Vessingue Strasse, and alongside one of the canals that intersect the city, look-

ing out for a new dealer, the last one not having supplied us with good articles. I had not long to search before I came to a shop of a very tempting appearance indeed; being beautifully painted and varnished inside and out, and displaying in its crystal windows almost every commodity of which I was in want.

There was, however, one object of paramount attraction that fixed my attention more than all the others; this was a very pretty little Dutchwoman, with eyes like black beads, a smart French cap on her glossy round head, and a coquettish air that did not seem at all racy of the swamps and quagmires of her native soil. I hope the indulgent reader will pardon this fresh instance of infidelity, as he will doubtless call it; but there is something so fascinating, so mesmeric, as it were, in the smile of a pretty woman, that no man who is once placed within its maddening focus can thenceforward be looked upon as an accountable being.

In this predicament I felt myself, as I entered the shop where my little Dutchwoman was serving behind the counter, assisted by a shop-boy. To my great delight, she spoke French fluently, and it sounded from her lips like music to my ears; for I never cared much about German, either High or Low, with its soapy pronunciation, and its alphabet of spiders and grasshoppers.

I addressed myself immediately to my task, while she evinced equal assiduity in assisting me; and between us, my hampers were speedily filled, and my purse emptied; whole volleys of smiles, and volumes of honied words and expressions being in the meantime interchanged between us.

When the bill was made out and duly paid and receipted, Madame (for she told me she was married, though I persisted in calling her *Mademoiselle*), asked me if I would like some refreshment, and invited me into a small parlour behind the shop, which was the most singularly neat and clean little compartment of domestic comfort I had ever seen. The floor was scrubbed as white as snow, being uncarpeted through the heat of the weather; the stove and fire-irons shone like silver, the mahogany tables, chairs, and chiffonniers were polished to a painful degree of lucidity; while an equally transparent cabinet, made of some curiously-variegated foreign wood, was literally crammed with little plates, dishes, tea-pots, cups, saucers, and cream jugs, with a thousand other little articles more curious than useful, of the most rare and delicate china, and the most singular varieties of shape and pattern.

My fair hostess seemed to enjoy my surprise at what I saw; and, having rung for refreshments, she sat down beside me on the sofa, without any affectation of prudery or bashfulness; but also without the slightest appearance of unbecoming freedom or indiscretion. We were, in fact, like a brother and sister who had accidentally met after a long separation.

Sweetmeats, confectionery, and coffee were speedily served; the latter without sugar, in excessively small, transparent China cups, encased in silver filigree. Though it was the purest Mocha, I begged for a little sugar, which she immediately produced, with a

smile at what to her at least was an innovation; for the Dutch drink coffee incessantly, without any saccharine admixture; the ladies sitting with their feet on little charcoal stoves, and the gentlemen with the eternal meerschaum in their capacious mouths.

When the coffee-cups were removed, they were succeeded by one of those delicious liqueur cases for which the Low Countries are famous. It was a square box of sandal-wood, inlaid with ivory, highly polished, and diffusing around a delightful aroma. It was lined with crimson velvet, and held four small decanters, curiously carved and gilt; one containing *crème de noyau*, another *parfait amour*, and a third *huile de Vénus*: what was in the fourth I cannot now recollect; for the ineffable smile my fair hostess bestowed upon me, as we touched glasses, drove everything else out of my head but her own perfect beauty.

And it really was beauty of the highest order: a Grecian contour, a clear bright forehead, a sparkling complexion, pouting lips, and finely modelled chin, with a matchless bust and a full round form that would have exceedingly puzzled any of our P.R.B.s to twist into their diabolical lines of beauty. All in fact was perfect, except one particular feature; what that was, I'll tell you presently; but never, my dear reader, as long as you live, look into the mouth of a Dutchwoman.

I myself was a novice at the time, and took everything for granted that only offered a fair outside. It is true that my hostess had hitherto kept her lips as it were glued together, allowing her words to slide out through the smallest possible aperture: this I thought was rather too niminy-piminy; but it was an imperceptible flaw in the koh-i-noor, and vanished amidst the blaze of her loveliness.

I felt I cannot tell how; it must be that I was then and there, for the first time in my life, struck with all-consuming, all-absorbing love. I pressed her delicate fingers, which gently returned the pressure; I drew that dear little hand to my lips, while her face and neck were suffused with blushes. Like Rory O'More, I "looked in her eyes that were beaming with light." Nay, in imitation of that rollicking gentleman—pardon, dear reader, if I shock the unspeakable purity of your delicate mind; but I feel myself, so to speak, at an imaginary confessional; whether I shall ever be brought to one in reality, depends on the success of Cardinal Wiseman—but, as I said, in imitation of that rollicking countryman of mine, I was on the point of—

Fortunately, there was a little glass window in the partition, through which we could see what was going on in the shop; and just as I was on the point of desperately snatching a kiss, an elderly gentleman entering the front door, my lovely hostess started up, exclaiming—"Bon Dieu! c'est mon mari!"

Ah! that fatal exclamation! In all my previous trials and disappointments, my real, internal, heartfelt happiness had never been tampered with before; but in uttering these few insignificant words, my sweet hostess had inadvertently opened her mouth, and displayed between those ruby lips of hers, two frightful rows of stunted, black,

discoloured—tobacco pegs; I can call them nothing else, in short. In a moment, they dispelled my celestial delusion, and called up hideous images to my mind, which Holbein or Fuseli would have delighted in transferring from the palette to the canvas, could their genius have attained the full amount of my horror.

I had heard of women who were said to be beautiful in spite of their teeth, but I rejected the theory as untenable. I thought of strange, repulsive images, and I could think of nothing else; of painted sepulchres—of green mossy banks, that so often spring from a putrid source—of skeletons clothed with transparent flesh. I thought of the apples of the Dead Sea, and of those waxen representations of plague, which I had then read of, and have since seen in such perfection at the Boboli Palace (if I mistake not) at Florence. In the midst of these horrible images, I was presented to "*mon mari*."

"Monsieur," said my fair hostess, "has been kind enough to lay out ever so many guilders in refreshments for the camp."

"I am much obliged to him," said *mon mari*; "but don't you think, my dear, he looks ill or frightened at something or other?"

"Poor young gentleman!" she replied, "I fear he is going to have an attack of our terrible endemic."

"Well," said the elderly gentleman, "he does look as if he was going to have the cold fit."

"I have it already," I replied, "and with a vengeance too."

"I was not wrong then," said the elderly gentleman, as he handed me a paper of bark: "chew this, my dear sir," he continued, "on your way back to camp, and you'll get over it."

I took my leave at length, and marching off with my fatigue men, arrived in due time at our encampment.

And now arose a difficulty which I had never anticipated. In the midst of my delirium, I had lost the memorandum of my various commissions, and it was in vain I strove to recollect its items. I could think of nothing but Dead Sea apples and painted sepulchres. What was to be done? I might, it is true, have asked all my friends to come and select their own; but some were on picket, some were foraging, and some were visiting friends in other parts of the alignment; so, in my anxiety to get rid of my cargo, I sent it off haphazard, and made, of course, a variety of blunders. To one who wanted a pound of coffee, I sent an equal quantity of snuff; to another who was dying for a Stilton cheese, I sent a roll of tobacco, and so on: all these mistakes were soon rectified, amidst laughable explanations, but one was nearly productive of mischief.

Arthur of ours had given me money to buy him a telescope; but this, in the confusion of my mind, I sent to another, supplying him instead with a bottle of brandy. Now, poor Arthur was terribly "addicted," as the saying is; and, taking my innocent mistake for a deliberate insult, he sent me a message. Some of my friends would have had me pooh-pooh the affair; but at that time there was no such thing as a newspaper correspondence, to patch up a hole in a man's honour; so I went out with him, but with a firm determination not to return his fire.

Fortunately for all parties, Arthur's hand was very unsteady from his overnight's potations: instead of me, therefore, he hit his own second, as he was gracefully retiring from the line of fire; and hit him, too, in that part of the human frame which is said to have formerly so much redounded to the honour and profit of the learned Taliocotius. As soon as he had performed this notable exploit, Arthur turned on his heel and marched off, declaring that his honour was satisfied; while I took deliberate aim at a crow that came sailing along over his head, and brought it down, in spite of my laughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOMBARDMENT.

BUT now, at length, the tug of war came on, at least for the poor inhabitants of Flushing, which we bombarded for three or four days, by sea and land, with four or five hundred pieces of ordnance, more or less; exclusive of Shrapnell-shells and Congreve-rockets, which had just then come into fashion, and made a pretty flare-up in the night, to the admiration of all unconcerned spectators.

The Shrapnell-shell, or, as it is technically called, spherical-case shot, has this advantage over the ordinary canister, that, whereas the latter explodes immediately on leaving the gun, and spreads its bullets so wide that few of them will take precise effect at three hundred yards, the Shrapnell may be thrown two miles, and then explode within a calculated distance of the object to be attained; scattering, with murderous effect, not only its own splinters, but the two or three hundred musket balls with which it is charged. These terrible missiles were principally directed, at Flushing, against any uncovered bodies of the enemy's troops who might have been within range; and who were sorely galled and sadly puzzled by such excellent rifle practice, as they deemed it to be, from an outlying picket a couple of miles distant from them.

The Congreve-rockets were equally new and astounding to the garrison of Flushing, but infinitely more destructive. The tremendous rush with which they soared aloft, and the trail of flame that marked their course during the night, must have had a terrifying effect on the trembling inhabitants of that doomed city; but when they saw their pointed tubes irrevocably fixed wherever they struck, pouring forth innumerable jets of fire that ignited everything inflammable within their terrible compass, they must indeed have looked upon them as a rare production of that infernal gentleman who, according to Milton, astonished the angels themselves with the invention of gunpowder. Such, in fact, was the horror they occasioned, that General Monnet, the French commandant, made a formal remonstrance to Lord Chatham against their being used in the bombardment; which, however, his lordship paid very little attention to.

While these and the ordinary shells, and guns of every calibre,

kept up an incessant fire upon Flushing from the land side, our numerous ships of war assailed it on the sea-face, which extended the whole length of the city; pouring in a perpetual succession of broadsides, with showers of shells from the bomb-ketches, whose repeated explosions among the streets and houses increased the infernal din, and materially added to the wide-spread destruction. The result was, that this most unfortunate city was knocked all to atoms, to the consternation and dismay of its helpless inhabitants, with whom we all the while expressed repeated wishes to be on the most friendly terms; though doubtless, as they crept from the fiery torrent, into holes, and cellars, and bomb-proofs, they uttered curses, both loud and deep, at such overtures of friendship.

Meanwhile, we, who were committing all this havoc, suffered literally nothing from the fire of the enemy, which was speedily silenced; but, with the unreflecting curiosity of youth, I fear we rather enjoyed the novelty and martial splendour of the bombardment, especially as we were too far off to witness its frightful results to the inhabitants, or to hear the groans and shrieks of the mutilated and wretched sufferers.

Certain it is, that, during the night, we all crowded upon the roofs of the neighbouring farm-houses, to witness the star-like progress and the final bursting of the shells, the rushing flame of the Congreve-rockets, and the numerous fires that were constantly breaking out in every part of the town, shooting up their spiral volumes of smoke and flame to heaven; while, at intervals, the dreadful explosion of a magazine would send a thrill of mingled pity, awe, and admiration through our hearts. One casualty we particularly lamented, which was occasioned by an unlucky shell, that carried off the belfry of the principal church, and effectually silenced its beautiful chimes, which had often soothed our angry spirits in the trenches with a celestial melody very different, indeed, from those triple bob-majors that make such a savage disturbance in this unmusical island of ours.

The town at length becoming too hot for the garrison, they hung out the white flag, and beat the *chamade* on the ramparts. After a parley, they agreed to surrender with the honours of war; and the principal gateway was put in possession of Pack's gallant corps, the 71st, till the definitive treaty should be signed by the respective commanders-in-chief.

In the afternoon of the same day, three or four brother officers and myself, urged by an unconquerable curiosity to see the town in its actual condition, walked out of the trenches, and made the best of our way through ruined farm-houses, and over the dead bodies of once jolly tars, fatigue-men, and out-lying pickets, in all stages of decomposition, till we arrived at the Middleburg gate. There, with some difficulty, we obtained permission to enter, from Captain Law, the officer in command; who cautioned us, however, to avoid carefully anything that might lead to a misunderstanding with the French troops, still in possession of the arsenal and other strong positions in the town; and especially to shun the Dutch, who were fearfully

exasperated against the English, for what they deemed a cruel and wanton destruction of their families and property.

Thus warned, we proceeded with due circumspection through streets and lanes, blocked up with fragments of ruined houses, broken furniture, and shattered property of every description: sad tokens of the destructive nature of our cannonade. Very few human beings were visible; for the frightened inhabitants had not yet ventured out of their hiding holes, and the French troops were kept close in their quarters, until the final arrangement took place.

Occasionally we met a small picket, or working party, carrying ammunition or dead bodies from one place to another; and whether it was that they had not shaved for a week, or were terribly gruelled at the idea of surrendering to the "*sacrés Godams*," as they very politely called us, they all looked as savage as if they could have eaten us without salt.

It being near the end of August, the weather was excessively hot; and the stench and dust arising from the smouldering ruins, added to the fiery nature of the atmosphere, caused a most intolerable thirst amongst us; which, with all our prying, we could not perceive any feasible mode of allaying.

"Surely," said one of our party, "all the wine shops cannot be blown up or knocked down by that confounded bombardment; if we could only light upon some good fellow now, that would show us the way to one."

"I am absolutely suffocating," I exclaimed, as my tongue knocked like a piece of dry leather against the roof of my mouth, "and would willingly give a guinea at this moment for a bottle of sour wine."

"Yonder's a Dutchman," cried Captain O'Driscoll, "standing on a bridge, and spitting into the water for want of better employment. Let us ask him the way to the nearest tavern."

Here, however, a difficulty occurred; for on comparing notes, not one of us, we found, could speak a word of Dutch.

"Never mind," said Jack Crossley, an old subaltern, who fancied himself a particularly clever fellow; "come on, my boys; I'll soon make the Dutchman understand what we want."

"How so?" demanded we *unâ voce*.

"By speaking broken English to the fellow," replied Crossley, with an air of undoubting confidence.

We all laughed at the absurdity of the idea. Captain O'Driscoll, being the senior officer amongst us, said the Dutchman would take it as an insult, and we should get into a scrape in consequence.

"No such thing, my dear fellow," said Crossley. "I have always found broken English a sort of universal language both with Dutchmen and Frenchmen; and I'll bet you a rump and dozen, he will understand me perfectly well, though I cannot speak a word of Dutch to him."

"Done!" said O'Driscoll, "I'll take your bet, just to show you what a *budhgai** you're going to make of yourself."

Anxious to witness the decision of a bet which now began to

* An Irish expression of ridicule; expressive, but untranslatable.

interest us for more reasons than one, we proceeded in a body towards the Dutchman, who, seeing us approach, folded his arms as he leaned against the parapet of the bridge, and reconnoitred us with an air of mingled *insouciance* and defiance.

He was a fine-looking man, in a sort of undress uniform, with a huge pair of moustachios, and a humourous twinkle of the eye, that seemed to encourage Crossley in his attempt, for he went boldly up, and addressed him in the following jargon, which very much deranged the gravity of our party.

"You 'standy where get eaty, drinky, brandy, cum watery wine-o?"

If this specimen of Crossley's universal language excited our merriment, the answer to it threw us into convulsions of laughter,

"Och! to be sure then I do, your honour," promptly replied the supposed Dutchman. "You've only to go down the *kay* there, to the 'Orange Boven,' where you'll find the best of aiting and dhrinking, and good dhry lodgings to boot, whether you're a man or a horse."

"There!" said Crossley, with a look of triumph that very much increased our laughter; "I told you that every Dutchman understood broken English."

The man, on inquiry, proved to belong to the Irish Brigade in the service of Napoleon, some companies of which had been detached from Antwerp, to do duty at Flushing during the siege. My readers, perhaps, know that this gallant and distinguished corps was exclusively composed of Irishmen, whose religious scruples and disabilities had sent them into voluntary exile from their native land, to avoid the pressure of laws which now happily no longer exist—laws that had long doomed some of the best blood of Ireland to be shed in the service of France, Spain, and Austria; and had given to whole generations of Blakes and O'Donnells the wealth and honours of every country but their own. As the reader also knows that an ancestor of mine was one of the original members of this distinguished body, I felt a more than ordinary sympathy for my poor countryman; and, pressing a Spanish dollar into his hand, I passed on with my comrades to the "Orange Boven."

This patriotic sign, which had lain hidden during the domination of the French, amongst the archives of the cautious innkeeper, was hung up by him the moment the town surrendered; while its predecessor, "Napoleon le Grand," was ignominiously bundled into the coal-hole. The joy of mynheer will therefore be readily surmised, on seeing, for the first time in his life, some English officers under his hospitable roof; and he accordingly treated us to everything excellent in the way of refreshment, duly charging for the same six times as much as he would have dared to demand from the French during their day of power.

In a week after this, the besieging force was drawn up on a range of sandhills extending in a northerly direction from the walls of Flushing; the original foundation on which this artificial island may be said to have been constructed. In their presence the garrison marched out with the honours of war; and I felt, in common with my brothers-in-arms, a justifiable triumph in seeing six thousand

Frenchmen lay down their arms at our feet, and embark, sorrowfully enough, Heaven knows, in transports, to be conveyed to England. Some, doubtless, were destined for Norman Cross; and, as the idea struck me, I felt a pang of remorse and sorrow, at having so speedily forgotten my still-admired Harriet Sibley.

But, alas! our triumph ended here. For, between the utter ignorance, the tardy proceedings, and the scandalous dissensions of our naval and military commanders, Antwerp was forgotten, the power and honour of England were alike overlooked, and the troops who would have nobly served their country on the battle-field, were doomed to perish ingloriously by lingering disease; while their country looked on, as if spell-bound, at this fruitless sacrifice of several thousands of lives, and this shameful expenditure of many millions of pounds sterling!

Some of our regiments were marched into quarters at Terveer and Arnemuyden, and others at Middleburg, until it should be decided what was eventually to be done with them; for they were evidently poor Lord Chatham's great embarrassment. Willingly would he have seen them all comfortably laid at the bottom of the *Room-Pot*, could the thing be done without any trouble; but, as this was not feasible, he took the next best course, and went off to England, leaving them to get out of the mess the best way they could.

He was received by his brother imbeciles, the ministers of the day, as Noodle might be supposed to receive Doodle, at the court of King Arthur, under similar circumstances: they embraced, danced a rigadon, and washed their hands of so disagreeable an affair altogether; declaring to John Bull, when he began to grumble, that it was all right, and he knew nothing at all about the matter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WALCHEREN AGUE.

MEANWHILE our hospitals at Middleburg, Flushing, and Terveer were filling daily, hourly, with burning and shivering wretches; wasting, pining, and dying under the influence of a deadly disease and the inadequacy and ignorance of our medical staff.

It was pitiable to see the strongest and finest men in this devoted army, for they were the first to fall victims to the insidious malady, emaciated, pale, and visibly withering away,—their teeth chattering, their limbs shaking, as if their noble spirits were quailing at the approach of the grim tyrant whom they had so often braved in the field; while, with faint and quavering voices, they called for more blankets, in the vain hope of imparting a little warmth to their ice-stricken frames; or, in the paroxysm of the hot fit, screaming for drink, to allay the quenchless thirst that was racking their vitals and shrivelling up their parched and burning throats.

I kept up for a long time, owing, principally to my great animal

spirits and active habits ; but at last I felt the insidious approaches of the foe, and prepared for a formidable attack. My regiment being quartered in Middleburg, I was billeted on an old Scotch gentleman, who had been so long in the country that he had very nearly forgotten to speak English ; and during my illness I was often amused at the dialogues that ensued between him and Conolly—the Irish phraseology of the one harmonizing beautifully with the Anglo-Dutch of the other.

This canny old Scot, however, made me very comfortable. I had a fine light, airy room on the ground floor, nicely furnished, and scrupulously clean, the floor being as highly polished as the tables and chairs, while on each side of the window, externally, was fixed a looking-glass, by which I could see every individual coming up and down the street, without stirring from my chair inside.

But my greatest luxury was a handsome French bedstead, with elegant curtains depending from a lofty gilt canopy, affixed to the wall. The bed itself was a huge mountain of feathers, in which I sank so deep that I disappeared altogether from the wondering eyes of Conolly, as he laid over me a sort of second bed of beautifully quilted silk, under which I lay, as he said, like a crow in a clover-field.

This was such a change from the bed of earth on which I had been stretched for so many weary hours during the siege, that the whole night I could not sleep a wink from absolute enjoyment.

But I soon got tired of my delicious bed, and heartily wished myself back once more on the cold earth of my old encampment, where my blood flowed in a genial current, and health, strength, and activity enabled me to spurn with contempt all cares that flesh is heir to. The very morning after I had entered my cozy billet, when I sat down to breakfast, I began to loathe my tea ; and as I pushed the cup and saucer from me with unaccountable dislike, I observed that my finger nails had all turned as blue as indigo. Conolly, who had also observed the dismal symptoms, exclaimed in a voice of condolence,—

“Masther, honey, you’re in for it.”

“In for it !” I repeated.

“That same, sir,” replied Conolly. “You’re going to have a fit of the shakes. That’s just the way the men are seized in the hospital, and they’re dying by dozens there every day.”

In a few moments after, I felt an unwonted chill creeping all over my frame. Where it commenced I could not say, but from the crown of my head to the ball of my foot I was speedily reduced to a mass of ice—of living, breathing, sentient ice. The warm current of my blood was suddenly arrested by the finger of a polar frost ; and, within three feet of a blazing wood fire on the hearth, I felt not its influence ; nay, when I desperately thrust my hand into the blaze, it pained and burned, but it warmed me not.

So I made the best of the matter, and tumbled into bed, while Conolly piled blankets upon blankets over me, and heaped huge logs upon the fire ; but still I remained cold and frost-bitten in the midst

of all. Our surgeon paid me a flying visit, and said I must have patience, for I should soon be able to write a thesis on the philosophy of contrast. With these enigmatical words he hurried off to his hospital, where six hundred men of our battalion, which had recently marched into Middleburg eight hundred strong, were now lying in as helpless a condition as I was myself.

"Patience, and shuffle the cards, then, Conolly," I said, "that's all we have for it ;" and my voice shook and jibbered between my teeth, while my limbs and body underwent a convulsive *tremolando*, as if the whole anatomy of my frame was falling into countless icicles. "Wheel that table over here, close by the fireside," I continued, "and put the doctor's stuff within my reach ; I'll take it when I can find courage enough to face a dose of salts."

While Conolly was wheeling the table, a sort of writing table, with two deep drawers in it, close between the head of my bed and the fireplace, something rolled inside of the drawers, and on opening it, he exclaimed with a sort of grunt :—

"Well, by the powers, I never seen anything like that afore."

"What do you see ?" I demanded.

"A dozen eggs," he replied ; "fine, fresh ones, too," as he held one between him and the light. "Well, that accounts for the old Dutchman's saying you wor as poor as a church mouse ; he has left them for your breakfast, sir."

"Nonsense," I said, in a peevish tone, the invariable attendant of the cold fit. "Besides, he's not a Dutchman, Conolly ; he's a Scotchman."

"Dutchman or Scotchman," responded Conolly, "'tis six ov one and half a dozen ov another : they're birds of the same feather, and sure the only differ there is betune 'um is one is spelt with a C and the other with a D."

I could not help smiling at this orthographical discovery, in spite of the icy torments under which I was suffering.

"I have a great mind," said Conolly, "to throw 'em all in the old fellow's face."

"On no account," I said, "for it shows, at least, a kind feeling, if it be not a mistake altogether—but oh, good heavens !" I exclaimed, as a new phase of my disorder supervened.

"What is it, masher Percy ?" cried Conolly, in a fright, as he pushed in the drawer with the eggs. "What's the matter wid ye, masher, dear ?"

"This change is so delightful," I exclaimed, as a gentle glow at length began to pervade my shivering frame, and the frozen horrors of the first fit were gradually disappearing before the "flattering unction" that ushers in the second.

I think it is Colonel Crocket who so graphically describes the delightful transition he experienced, when, on being almost frozen to death one night amongst the lakes and backwoods, he lay down the next morning in a spring of running water, to be dissolved from his icy fetters. Something equally, if not more delicious, I felt, as kind nature seemed to pour a fluid of reviving warmth through my veins,

which not only restored my original temperament, but soon began to excite my imagination to a splendid luxuriance of castle-building, in which I drew such pictures of sublunary bliss, as Mahomet himself never surpassed in his dreamy visits to the seventh heaven.

Had it stopped here, it would have been really transcendent ; but the fluid, which before was warm and vivifying, became gradually hot and hotter, till it actually began to scald me internally, while the outer surface of my body was burnt to as dry and arid a consistency as a hot cinder.

Meanwhile, the torrid condition of the flesh began to operate on the mind. My brain was whirling in a countless series of concentric ravings : I was swimming in hot water, struggling for my life in boiling oil, gasping for breath in a sea of molten lead ; while fiends of every shape and hue were skirling along its glistening surface, flourishing their whips of scorpions over my devoted head, and stunning my ears with fiendish yells that may find some faint resemblance in the railway-whistle.

It was in vain that I kicked off blankets and bed-clothes ; it was in vain that I begged Conolly to roll me naked in the snow, or to plunge me into an ice-bath. Nothing could avail me in my hopeless condition : the powers of medicine were set at nought ; Galen and Paracelsus were alike baffled, and no balm could be found for my infernal sufferings in the three hundred volumes of the one or the *elixir vitæ* of the other.

Nature at length came to my relief when I was on the point of suffocation : my skin, hitherto like shrivelled parchment, became soft and moist ; a gentle perspiration oozed through the pores ; the fluid fire, which had so long been coursing through my veins, gradually subsided to a tepid heat, and I went off insensibly into a long and tranquil sleep.

Such was my first attack of the Walcheren ague ; and I never, before or since, felt anything like that cruel disease. But though it was, happily, not what Mrs. Quickly calls a "*Quotidian-Tertian*," it was nearly as bad, from the still-impending gloom of anticipative horrors,—for every third morning, as fixed as fate, the blue nails cast a frightful shadow of the coming event.

Thousands upon thousands of fine fellows, who ought at that moment to have been combing down the Gallic cock in the Peninsula, were literally floored by this awful disease ; for bedsteads could not be found in sufficient numbers, and they lay upon the ground, in the hospitals, in every stage of lingering death.

Our medical men were actually bewildered ; for, though they were all skilful enough at bayonet or gun-shot wounds, they knew not how to cope with so insidious an enemy. They were, moreover, worked off their legs ; till, the commander-in-chief applying for an increased medical staff, we were inundated with a host of hospital mates,—young men fresh from their studies, raw, inexperienced, and presuming, who killed a great many more by their wild experiments than they cured by their book-learned skill.

I was delivered over to the tender mercies of one of these *alumni*

of Apothecaries' Hall, who put me through more manœuvres than Sir David Dundas ever dreamt of, in the vain hope of discovering the fountain-head of the disease. Solutions of arsenic, and other rank poisons, I recollect, were amongst the *arcana* of his juvenile art. Whether these infinitesimal doses laid the foundation of the Homœopathic system, I cannot say; but one of his remedies certainly led to an ingenious discovery, similar to one that has long been immensely attractive to the curious and sight-seeing public of this vast metropolis.

My young medical friend, with a view to kill the cold fit instantler, prescribed repeated fomentation of the extremities, on its approach. Conolly, therefore, went out and bought a huge roll of flannel; he then plied logs of wood upon the fire, and hung kettles of water over them, in active preparation to meet the enemy.

Accordingly, when the nails began to assume the cerulean tinge, Mr. Conolly tore off sundry strips of the flannel, plunged them into hot water, and wrapped them, scalding hot, about my legs, feet, hands, and arms; with many eulogiums, at the same time, on the cuteness of them London chaps, who seemed to know everything, from the construction of a Thames punt to the inflation of an air-balloon.

With intense assiduity and care, poor Conolly went on fermenting me, as he called it; tearing off a piece of fresh flannel for every change, and, like a true Irishman, poking the one just used into the nearest hole at hand, which happened to be the deep drawer of the table before-mentioned, in which my good old Scotchman had placed his dozen eggs.

By this process, we were speedily enveloped in an atmosphere of steam, something like the sulphur-baths at the *Lago d'Agnano*, while perspiration rolled down Conolly's face; and the table-drawer, which was close to the huge fire, actually smoked with the vapour engendered therein from the damp flannels.

But, alas! this wondrous remedy was fruitless altogether, as regarded me personally, for the icy-hearted disease bade defiance to the powers of steam; but it led to a result altogether new and stupendous, which far surpassed even the boundless genius of the young conjuror who had medical charge of me.

One morning, after a week's perseverance in the hot-water cure, my attention was attracted by a curious sort of fluttering and scratching at the head of my bed, which puzzled me as much as the spiritual tappings puzzle the *gobe-mouches* of the present day.

Ringling the bell for Conolly, I desired him to look about for a rat or a mouse, that appeared to be gnawing some of the bed-furniture. He accordingly listened for awhile, and, thinking he had ascertained the point of attack, he opened the table-drawer slowly, that he might the more certainly pounce upon the enemy; when, suddenly, with an exclamation of fright, he started back, pointing in terror at the table-drawer.

I looked towards the spot indicated; and, to my utter astonishment, saw a dozen little yellow-bellied chickens hopping up, one

after another, on the edge of the drawer, and thence down upon the floor, with a consecutive sort of motion that certainly bore some resemblance to the convolutions of a "fiery serpent," as Conolly had called it, in his first alarm.

The fright of my poor valet, instead of being dissipated by the *mot de l'énigme*, which was now quite apparent to me, became still more ludicrous than before. Fancying himself beset by a whole desert of "fiery serpents," he fled from one corner of the room to another, in an agony of fright, and bellowing for assistance; while the "unfledged bipeds" hopped after him, with a natural instinct, in search of food, fluttering their tiny wings, and jumping over each other's backs, as if they were playing at leap-frog for our amusement.

The scene, altogether, was so strange, and so irresistibly comic, that I actually roared with laughter to such a degree that the noise Conolly and I made between us brought in my host and all his family, to see if we were not both in a state of raging frenzy.

"My dear Mr. M'Cracken," I said, when I was at length able to articulate, "you were good enough to give me a dozen eggs; and I now return the compliment with as many chickens."

The old Scotchman was shrewd enough to comprehend the real state of the case after a little explanation, and marched off in triumph with his young stock of poultry; but Conolly, to the very last, looked upon it as the trick of some Dutch fiend, to cheat him out of his blessed religion; and I never could make him understand the mysteries of steam-incubation.

"You may say what you like, sir," said Conolly; "but them chickens belong to the 'Good People,' and I'd no more ate one of 'em than I'd ate my own grandfather."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LINE-OF-BATTLE SHIP.

At length, when one-fourth were utterly destroyed, and another fourth rendered unfit for service, of the finest expedition that ever left the shores of Great Britain, the wise men who planned it, and who ought to have been duly whipped at the cart's tail for the same, thought proper to bring back the sad remains: thus verifying the nursery rhyme:

"The king of France, with twenty thousand men,
March'd up the hill, and then—march'd down again."

Orders were accordingly issued to embark the troops for England, and to blow in the docks and basins of Flushing; this being the mighty result of an enterprise which cost England several thousand men and many millions of money.

The troops were embarked in November, on board the ships of war and transports then lying off Flushing and Terveer, the remnant

of my regiment being easily disposed of in the *Vengeur*, 74; and towards the end of that month we bade adieu, with unanimous and infinite satisfaction, to a scene of so much misery and mortification.

"Oh, by the powers!" said Conolly, as he brought my luggage down to the cabin allotted to me, on the main-deck, "we have got into a fine vessel now, anyhow; as much like the dirty ould transport we kem over in, as a pewter spoon is like a silver goblet. Only see what a fine large window you've got in your cabin, Master Percy; with a beautiful big gun in it, all as clean and as bright as a new pin; and the Lord be merciful to me! if there isn't a lock and trigger upon it, all the same as if it was a natural-born musket. Then, the decks are as smooth and as white as a sheet of paper; with a kitchen, and a fire-place, and mess-coppers, all big enough for Fune-a-ma-cool. Sure, it's wishing I am that our passage may last for a month of Sundays, there's such elegant aiting and drinking goin on, day and night; and the men are so silent and well-behaved when they're pulling the ropes, you'd think it was the lord mayor's drawing-room, or a levee at Dublin Castle; with the boatswain there, like the lord lieutenant, giving his orders, with a whistle in his mouth——"

Here I cut Mr. Conolly short in his rambling description of the *agréments* of a seventy-four; and told him he must be on his p's and q's, now that he was in a king's ship; a piece of advice which he promised to follow to the letter. I did not see him again for four-and-twenty-hours, and supposed he was sea-sick, as we were now lying our course with a spanking breeze; but when he did make his appearance, he looked terribly chapfallen.

"What's the matter, now," I said, "Conolly? You look as if you couldn't help it."

"And no wondher for me, sir," replied Conolly. "Tear-an-ages! did any one ever see such a savage place as this we've got into, now?"

"You were all in its praise," I observed, "the last time I saw you."

"I was young and foolish then, your honour," said Conolly; "but I'm wiser and sadder, now, as you say yourself."

"What has happened to you, Conolly?" I demanded, pretty well conjecturing the state of the case.

"Plenty, and more of it, sir," replied Conolly. "First and foremost, I was standing paicefully and quietly yesterday, on a place they call the quarter-deck, when a mighty cross-looking chap, with a cocked-hat on his head and a long telescope under his arm, suddenly called out:

"'Midshipman of the watch!'

"'Ay, ay, sir,' said another, jumping down from the Lord knows where, with a little bit of a caubeen on his head, covered with tarpaulin, that they call a sou'wester.

"'Here's a marine adrift,' said the one with the telescope.

"'It's only a young lobster, sir,' said the other, catching a houl't of me by the ear; 'he's only parboiled as yet, sir,' says he. And

with that he lugged me forward to the *fokesal*, as they call it; and there he let me go, saying, 'That's your place, young man: never let me see you abaft the main hatchway again.'"

"I told you, Conolly," I said, "that you must be very particular in a king's ship. What happened next?"

"Well, sir," replied Conolly, "thinking to make myself useful, when the word was given to haul taut the lee braces, I tackled to a rope, along with the rest, and began pulling away and singing out as they used to do in the transport, 'Yo, heave O, Yo ho——'

"'Silence, you lubber!' cried the bosen, giving me a crack of a rope on the back; 'silence, and learn to hold your jaw in a king's ship!'

"Well, sir, myself didn't like to be knocked about and pulled about in this way, so I gave up pulling and hauling, and sat down on a big cannon to hide my vexation; when the bosen's mate, just like his master, came across my back with another rope's end, crying out,

"'Don't you ever dare to sit on a gun, you lubber, in this here ship again.'

"'I ax pardon, sir,' says I; 'where am I to sit, then?'

"'In lubber's hole, to be sure,' says he, with a grin.

"Then I asked a daisent young man, where lubber's hole was, and he pointed to the top ov the mast. So, thinking that was the place fixed for the soldiers to be out of the way like, I climbed up the rope ladders, fearing every moment I'd fall into the sea. But just as I put my head through a hole in the big flure at the top of the mast, two sailors caught a houl't of me by the ears; and says one, says he:—

"'Avast, you lubber! where be you a going to?'

"'I'm going to lubber's hole, sir,' says I.

"'Then you must pay your footing,' says the other, 'so fork out!'

"But I said, I wouldn't pay no footing, for I had only a dollar about me, and that belonged to you, sir. So they caught houl't of me, and tied me up to the rope-ladder, legs and arms, like a spread-aigle; and there the villians left me for two mortial hours, till at last I was obliged to pay them the dollar to let me go. Well, sir, when I came down, three or four fellows gother about me, and says one, says he:—

"'Where did you come from?' says he.

"'I come down from the ropes, sir,' says I.

"'What do you call the ropes?' says he.

"'All them ropes that's flying about over our heads,' says I.

"'There's only three ropes in the ship, you lubber,' says another; 'and this is one of 'em;' giving me at the same time a lick across the back with a rope's end.

"'And this is another of them,' said a second fellow, giving me another crack when I turned round to ask the first what he meant by it.

"Well, sir, to make a long story short, as the saying is, there I was betune 'em all; and every time I turned round to face one enemy, another behind would give me a crack of a rope's end, till at last my back was all full of ridges and furrows, like a praty field.

"But that was cakes and ale to what happened at night; for when I was fast asleep in my hammock, the villians cut the strings, and down I came, whack upon the deck; faith, I thought every bone in my body was bruck to smithereens.

"Well, sir, at last I got up, and lay down upon the deck, for fear of another hoist, covering myself up in my blanket, snug and cozy; when one of the invisible devils, for they were no more to be seen than the good people* themselves, let dhrive a bucket of water souse upon me, that wet me to the very skin.

"'What's that?' I said, as soon as I got the water out of my mouth.

"'That's a salt-eel for your supper,' said the villian, as he ran off with his brother scamps, all ready to split their sides with laughing.

"Well, sir," continued Conolly, "very little sleep did I get that blessed night, what wid the cutting down, and the salt-eel, and the cockroaches that were crawling over my face and into my ears, with their sticky legs and fingers, till daylight; when, just as I was getting into a nice little doze, I heard a rumbling sort of a noise like distant thunder, and a dashing of water about, as if we were going to Davy's locker in earnest. Up I jumped, and, opening my eyes, I saw some of the say-going divils hauling a large square stone backwards and forwards on the deck, while others were dashing buckets of water about like mad, and others again, with huge swabs, sopping it up after 'em.

"'Come here, you lubber,' says one, 'and take a spell at this holy-stone.'

"'He's a papist,' says another, 'and only believes in holy water.' With that he let dhrive a bucket, and set me afloat again.

"'To the divil I pitch ye,' I said, 'for English heretics, that don't believe in holy-stones or holy water either, till ould Nick gets a houl't o' ye.'

"Well, sir, off I ran, till the carpenter's mate, a countryman ov my own, took compassion on me, and gave me a place in his berth, and a breakfast, too, though I spoilt the tay by boiling salt water for it."

Such were the trials of Mr. Conolly in a line-of-battle ship; which, though vastly superior to others in cleanliness and accommodation, is a mode of conveyance by no means a favourite with our troops, who generally prefer the free-and-easy system of the filthy old transport.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WELLINGTON OVER-ALL.

OUR passage, fortunately, was a short one, and in due time we were landed at Chatham, where there was an extensive depôt. It was with great delight that we once more trod upon English ground; but I had the mortification of going into the sick-list again, from a

* Fairies.

relapse of the Walcheren ague, a misery which was entailed upon many thousands long after the termination of that pestilential enterprise.

In six or eight weeks, however, after my return from the land of frogs, and vrows, and agues, I felt myself, though still rather weak, well enough to go to mess; and I really did enjoy society once more, after so long a seclusion in my barrack-room, with all its attendant horrors of bark and arsenic, blue nails, shakings, and hot fits.

It being a garrison-mess, many of the members were utter strangers to me; for we had detachments and recruiting companies from several of the regiments then in the Peninsula, where also was my first battalion, in which I had recently become effective. But military men are a gregarious race, by habit, at least, if not from nature, and we were soon intimate enough with one another.

My new companions were, generally speaking, an excellent set of fellows: light-hearted, free from care, and averse to thought; for, though a few of them had seen a little service, the majority were fresh from school, or just released from their mother's apron strings. Our pranks and follies, were, therefore, not of a very sage or prudential character; but they won us no ill-will amongst the inhabitants of Chatham, or its neighbour, Rochester, who looked upon them rather as the ebullitions of unthinking youth, than the indications of depraved or malignant dispositions.

There was, however, one amongst us by no means a general favourite; who, so far from mingling in our little spree, seemed to move in a higher sphere, and kept himself rather ostentatiously aloof from our occasionally boisterous merriment. This was Captain F. W. B. A. C. D. Hopkins, or, as we called him for brevity, Alphabet Hopkins; a *sobriquet* which by no means harmonized with his own notions of self-importance, or the respect that was due to his superior merit and rapidly progressive promotion.

He was a very handsome young fellow, so far at least as regularity of features may be so termed, though devoid of expression; and of great symmetry and personal grace, mingled, however, with intolerable conceit and supercilious manners, which effectually marred the impression he seemed at all times anxious to make. He was accomplished, in the ordinary acceptation of the word; that is, he had a showy smattering of French and Italian, danced and fenced well, sang, played the guitar, and drew vapid landscapes in water-colours.

But, above all, he was an admirable shot with the pistol; and, indeed, rather prided himself on the character of a duellist, which he had successfully sustained in two or three rencounters. He had been but recently promoted to a company in the 28th, from the India staff of Sir Arthur Wellesley; and the ordinary tenour of his conversation was a perpetual ringing of the changes on the Governor-general, the Delhi durbar, the Commander-in-chief, the India staff, and the Bengal artillery.

I was speedily disgusted with the affectation and presumption of this ineffable person; but fancying that my dislike might have arisen from prejudice, I did all in my power to conquer it, and even made

some overtures towards an intimacy with him. These were received, as usual, with a supercilious smile, a haughty condescension, and a patronizing air; which so effectually checked my advances, that I very soon left him to the undisturbed enjoyment of his own super-eminent position. Evidently piqued at this, he condescended in turn to court my acquaintance; but I received his overtures with a cold disdain which I did not attempt to qualify, and which ultimately stung him into the bitterest animosity.

One evening, after dinner, the orders, as usual, were brought in by our respective orderly sergeants; and as I cast my eyes over the book that was presented to me, a young fellow near me called out:—

“Confound it all! I am for a garrison court-martial to-morrow. Blake, my dear fellow, will you take it for me, as I am engaged to go on a pleasant excursion up the Medway?”

“With all my heart,” I replied. “Will it be a long affair? Who’s to be tried?”

“I’m sorry to say,” observed Captain Wallis, of the 28th, “that my pay-sergeant is one of the culprits.”

“What, O’Flaherty?” demanded another of the same regiment.

“Yes,” answered Captain Wallis: “as fine a fellow as ever stepped; but he has unfortunately got himself into a scrape, and is minus in his accounts.”

The name at first did not strike me: but on hearing it repeated, with a variety of comments, generally of a favourable character, I felt convinced that it could be no other than my poor uncle, whose adventure with the mad bull I trust the reader has not yet forgotten. I had lost sight of him for some years; but his regiment, I now fully recollected, was the twenty-eighth.

The pang this conviction gave me, actually shook my frame, and made me sick at heart: for, under the most favourable circumstances, the idea of having an uncle in the ranks, in the very same garrison with me, was by no means flattering. But to see that uncle tried as a public delinquent; nay, to be actually one of his judges, compelled by duty, perhaps, to sentence him to a degrading punishment; forced to stand by while he received it, to hear his groans, to see my mother’s brother writhing in agony, his noble heart breaking under the atrocious infliction, while he vented reproaches, perhaps curses, against the unnatural nephew who had doomed him to so indelible a disgrace—all these thoughts rushed with the speed of lightning through my brain, and I was compelled to swallow a tumbler of water to prevent me from fainting.

In the midst of my confusion, my eye fell upon Alphabet Hopkins; who seemed to be looking at me with a sardonic grin, as if he was absolutely conscious of what was passing in my mind. Fortunately, I had sufficient command over myself to check the rising passion that urged me to hurl a decanter at his head; for it subsequently appeared that he was only enjoying the anticipated pleasure of revenge on the luckless O’Flaherty, who had lost, or made away with, his favourite case of duelling pistols.

In a state of mind that beggars description, I now got up, and making the best excuse I could to my friend, for not taking his tour of duty as I had promised, I staggered out of the mess-room; nothing, indeed, but the fresh breeze that was blowing pretty strong outside prevented me from falling to the ground.

I took a few turns in the barrack-yard, till my thoughts had become more settled; and, having decided on the line of conduct which honour and the claims of kindred called upon me to adopt, I proceeded with a firm and collected mind towards the guard-room, where my uncle was in durance, and easily obtained admission to his presence.

I found him sitting on the guard-bed, in an inner room, at some distance from the other prisoners, and leaning in a melancholy mood on a small table, whereon a candle was dimly burning. His tall athletic figure bent in unwonted humility, his manly and somewhat stern features clothed in sorrow and unavailing contrition, he presented a figure that a lover of high art would be delighted to study for a Samson Agonistes or a Judas Maccabeus. The strong man was overthrown by the allurements of the syren, the noble fighter was betrayed by the deceitful smiles of fortune.

I sat down by the side of my hapless relative, and took his hand in mine before he was aware of my presence; but when he saw that his unexpected visitor was an officer, he started up with habitual respect, and carrying his hand to his forage-cap, he stood staring at me with an expression of mingled surprise and curiosity.

"My dear uncle," I said, as well as my emotion permitted, "sit down. I wish to talk with you."

"Uncle!" he exclaimed, in utter amazement.

"Do you not recollect Percy Blake?" I said, taking his hand again, and looking up into his face, with my eyes brimful of tears.

"Percy Blake," he cried, clasping his hands together. "And are you, then, Ensign Blake, of whom I have heard so much, and of whom I have such reason to be proud? Ah! 'tis true," he continued, as he gazed eagerly in my face. "There is the exact image, sure enough, of my poor sister Jane." Then, falling upon the guard-bed, he buried his face in his broad hands, and wept and sobbed as if his heart would burst.

There is something in the uncontrolled passion of a powerful man, that affects us more than the feeble wailings of less muscular persons; and, though not much given myself to the melting mood, except at the well-wrought imaginary sorrows of the novelist, I could not refrain, on such an occasion, from sharing the grief of my gigantic relative, and for some time we mingled our tears together.

Fortunately, his fellow-prisoners, who were at the other end of the room, gave audible indications of being far advanced in the land of dreams, and our sad communion was undisturbed.

At length, when our mutual passion had subsided, and my poor uncle had indulged in numerous self-reproaches at having reduced himself to such a condition that he could not even look his own

nephew in the face, I obtained from him an explanation of the cruel dilemma in which he was placed. From the account he gave me, and subsequent disclosures during his trial, the following appears to be a correct narrative of the tragi-comic adventure which had led to his incarceration

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN O'FLAHERTY.

To his own amazement, and that of all others who knew him, my poor uncle had been for a long time getting on with a steadiness and sobriety that were winning him golden opinions from the constituted authorities, when his evil destiny threw into his pocket the sum of £21. 5s. 6d. old prize money, and from that period his ruin may be safely dated.

It was not for the money, *per se*, that he cared a rush, nor was he dazzled by the large amount, having frequently had much more in his possession; but then it was company's money, which my uncle always justly considered as a sacred deposit. Now, however, he had twenty guineas of his own, honourably and dearly earned, on which there was no earthly claim, and which, in fact, was a perfect superfluity, his pay being fully adequate to all his wants and wishes. Having, also, no poor relation with whom to share this treasure, his first thought was, to give a grand entertainment to the whole garrison; but this he found was inadmissible. He then hit upon some other equally prudent schemes; but finally resolved, as a *dernier resort*, to make a trip to London, which city he had only once had a misty glimpse of, as he marched through it on a wet day with a body of recruits to Chatham.

Accordingly, having obtained a week's furlough, O'Flaherty purchased a suit of multi, including a handsome frock-coat, frogged, braided, and tasselled according to the military fashion of the day. He then booked himself an inside passenger in the stage, and started for London, having first taken the precaution to pin up the mouth of that pocket in which he had deposited a green silk purse containing the remainder of his prize money, together with five or six pounds belonging to the company of which he was pay-sergeant. He had also under his charge, I must not forget to state, a handsome mahogany case, containing the favourite duelling pistols of Alphabet Hopkins, which he was commissioned to get cleaned and put in order by the maker in London.

My uncle, on arriving in the metropolis, having walked up one street and down another till he was well-nigh tired, dropped into a coffee-house, ordered a chop and a pint of madeira, to which was subsequently added a pint of port (for he was determined on being very moderate); and he concluded with a bottle of champagne, just to try the merits of that boasted tipple, to which he had hitherto been a

stranger. When he had discussed these creature comforts and paid his bill, my uncle got up, in his own conceit, as sober as a judge; and putting the case of duelling pistols under his arm, he sallied forth to execute his commission.

The fresh air, however, produced its usual effects; my uncle began to feel queer, and even suspected once or twice that he was not so steady as he ought to be. He therefore looked about for a place to sit down till the swimming in his head should pass away; and a billiard-room being the first asylum that offered itself, he walked in.

Strange to say, there was no one in the room but the marker, who handed my uncle a cue, and asked him if he would like to knock the balls about till some one arrived. My uncle had played this fascinating game in his youth: indeed, it was one of the idle and expensive habits which had driven him to enlist as a private soldier; but several years had elapsed since then, and he was now somewhat astonished to find with what facility he made hazards and cannons after so long an interval.

"Egad, sir, you're a clipper," said a young fellow who entered just as O'Flaherty had holed all the balls and made a cannon.

"Oh, that's a trifle," said my uncle, strangely elated by his success and the wine he had drunk. "There was a time," he added, with becoming modesty, "when I could make game off the balls three times out of five: but I am out of practice now."

"*Per Bacco!*" replied the stranger, with a pretty little Italian oath, "I should say the contrary. I should be sorry to take a red hazard from you for five guineas a game, and twenty the rub."

"Suppose you try a pool, gentlemen," said the marker, as two or three more strangers now dropped in one after another.

"With all my heart," said my uncle, "I don't mind if I lose a few shillings with you."

"Shillings!" exclaimed one with a stare.

"Shillings!" cried another with a laugh.

"The gentleman," said the marker quietly, "is, perhaps, not aware that this is a subscription table, and that half-guinea pool is the lowest limit allowed by the rules."

"Oh, that alters the case," said my uncle, heartily ashamed of his paltry stake, and anxious to retrieve his character in the eyes of his new friends, who were all stylish-looking fellows, dressed in the very acme of fashion, with gold watches, chains, rings, snuff-boxes, and eye-glasses sparkling about them, quite enough to stock a jeweller's shop in Cheapside.

"What say you, gentlemen," said the marker, "do you think it would be safe to lower the stake a little?"

"I don't know what Lord John would say to it," replied one.

"I know," said another, "that Sir Humphrey would cut me dead, if he ever heard of it."

"I could never show my face at Long's again," cried a third.

"There's no occasion in life to put yourselves to any trouble, gentlemen," said my uncle, somewhat "flabbergasted," as he said

himself, at these great names. "Sure, I'm agreeable to anything in *raison*."

A pool was accordingly determined on, and two or three of the strangers threw down half-a-dozen guineas each, to be exchanged for markers to pay for their lives as they fell; while my uncle, being now put on his mettle, and full of confidence in his own good play, took ten guineas from his green silk purse for a similar purpose.

Several pools were now played in rapid succession, in which fortune favoured the brave O'Flaherty to such a degree that, besides numerous hazards, he actually won the three first pools that were played. Then, whether his companions were getting more into play, or whether he was bothered by such a succession of lords, dukes, and earls, German barons, and counts of the holy Roman empire as beat incessantly upon his ear, certain it is that my poor uncle lost, not only his winnings, but also every one of the markers for which he had paid his ten guineas. Heated, vexed, and mortified, he now declared his intention of playing no more.

"No more!" exclaimed one with a stare.

"No more!" cried another with a whistle.

"Well, I'm blowed," said a third, a stout, bullet-headed fellow,—"I'm blowed if that ain't a regular do."

"What's that you say?" cried my uncle, with a sudden explosion of wrath.

"I say 'tis a regular do," repeated the bully, "to come for to go for to win our money in this here fashion, without giving us a chance for it again."

"I have won none of your money," said my uncle, "but I have lost a good deal of my own."

"Hark to the Irish gold-finder," exclaimed one of the party.

"If you dare say that again——" cried my uncle.

"Come, come," said bullet-head, "none of your big looks here, Mr. Irishman, or I'll pitch into you, though you are such a hulking fellow, and polish you off in less than no time."

To show that he really meant what he said, he threw off his coat, turned up his wrist-bands, and put himself into an attitude that indicated the perfection of science.

"See here now," cried my uncle, giving the table a slap with his huge palm that shook the whole tenement. "Just see here now, I could smash you as easy as an egg-shell, if I chose to make a black-guard of myself, which I shall not do, for it would be as much as my commission is worth. But if you are really for fighting, as you pretend, I'm your man, and this instant too, but it must be as a gentleman."

"Oh, oh!" cried all, *unà voce*.

"There is my card," said my uncle, who, in the vanity of his heart, had written himself down, "Captain O'Flaherty, of the Slashers."

The strangers gazed in silence on this formidable piece of paste-board, and looked at one another as if uncertain how to treat the announcement.

"And these," continued my uncle, unlocking the pistol-case, which he had placed on the billiard-table,— "these are my weapons."

Here an indistinct whispering took place amongst the strangers, who seemed to look rather blank at sight of the splendid duelling pistols.

"Now," resumed my uncle, "if you really feel disposed for a fight, take one of these beautiful barkers, and load it to your own taste. There is a flask of glazed powder; the balls and wadding all ready, cut and dry; the flints transparent as crystal, and a hair trigger that won't stand the brushing of a fly's wing. Then take your post at the other end of the table, unless, indeed, you prefer fighting across it; and if I don't make a box of cold meat of you in three jiffies, my name isn't Captain O'Flaherty."

This, of course, settled the affair. The serious tone of my uncle, and the unmistakable expression of his countenance, proved to the sharpers the necessity of a change in their tactics. They, accordingly, one and all, pressed round O'Flaherty with expressions of regret at having mistaken his rank, &c. &c., and the pugilist made a handsome apology for his rudeness, which was immediately accepted by my uncle, who was as easily pacified as roused to anger. It was then proposed that they should shake hands, and drown all animosity in the generous juice of the grape. Some bottles of champagne were accordingly procured from a neighbouring tavern, which healed all sores, and gave an additional stimulus to my poor relative's excited imagination.

From this period, my uncle could give no connected account of his London adventure; it being all buzz with him, as he said, after he had partaken of another bottle of champagne.

Certain gleams of recollection he had, however, from which he begged me to make out something like a continuous narrative, in the hope of discovering some clue or other out of the terrible labyrinth in which he was involved; for instance, he recollected that when called on to pay his bill, at the tavern where he put up, he found himself minus of his green silk purse and its contents.

Naturally concluding that his pocket had been picked by some of his quondam friends of the billiard-table, he was about to start back for its recovery, or, in default thereof, to take it out in a sound thrashing, indiscriminately bestowed upon the shoulders of the knaves who had plundered him. To this, however, the waiter and the landlord, and the landlord's wife, put in a demurrer, until the bill, amounting to £3. 15s., was liquidated. This was a poser for my poor uncle, who was fairly at his wits' end; when luckily the landlady opened the pistol-case, and exclaimed, with a gesture of surprise,—

"Lawk! only think; I declare to my gracious if it ben't a box full of young guns. Suppose you pop them."

My uncle, who had no idea of any sort of popping but one, was here let into popping of another description; and, at length, with great reluctance, consented to the only expedient that could now release him from durance vile. The porter, accordingly, took charge of the implements; and, after a short absence, very honestly brought him back £5. 10s. and a square bit of pasteboard, on which were

written certain hieroglyphics, that seemed to dance the hayes before his astonished eyes as he gazed on them.

When my uncle next came to his recollection, he found himself half-naked and fighting in the streets, somewhere in the precincts of Old Drury, but with whom and for what, he could not possibly imagine. As he was literally "an Irishman in a row, every one's customer," he maintained the pass against all comers, and flogged fifteen Charleys in succession, till at last he was captured by a rush of a dozen from all points of the compass; and being hand-cuffed and ankle-cuffed, he was borne off to Bow Street. Thence he was duly transmitted to his regiment; all bruised, and battered, as he said, like an old tin kettle that had gone the rounds at the tail of a mad dog.

"I shouldn't care a pinch of snuff," said my uncle, "for all the beatings in the world, for mine has been a give-and-take sort of life from my youth upwards: neither should I care for reduction to the ranks, for the first forlorn hope will give me back the worsted epaulette again; but the disgrace, nephew, the disgrace of the halberts will break my heart."

When my poor relative was a little more composed, I asked him how much of the company's money he was deficient in.

"About six pounds," he replied, with a heavy sigh.

"Well," I said, "I'm pretty sure I can make that up before the court sits to-morrow."

"My poor dear nephew," said he, squeezing my hand, affectionately, it will ruin you; and I shall never forgive myself for involving you in my troubles. Besides, 'tis of no use; for I shall be equally disgraced on account of the pistols."

"How much were they pawned for?" I demanded.

"Five pounds ten shillings," he replied.

"Well, give me the ticket," I said. "It may not yet be too late to redeem them."

"It's lost," he replied with a heavy sigh. "I cannot find it high or low."

This was, indeed, a serious blow to my hopes; and I now began really to despair of saving my poor uncle from the disgrace he so justly dreaded.

"Do you think," I asked, "that Captain Hopkins would consent to receive from me an equally valuable case, in lieu of the one he has lost?"

"Not he, the puppy," replied my uncle. "He was in a towering passion when he heard of the loss, and swore a dreadful oath that he would take ample vengeance out of my back."

This was just as I expected, and perfectly in keeping with the character of the man. I knew not, therefore, what course to pursue; and sat silent and melancholy, gazing upon my unhappy relative with a woe-begone countenance, even worse than his own.

"Well," he said, with an effort to rouse himself, "there's no use in sighing and dying, anyhow, and I must keep up my courage for the trial. My dear nephew, just hand me a *dhudheen** that

* A short pipe.

you'll find in my jacket pocket ; it's hanging up on the nail yonder."

I searched accordingly, but couldn't find the comforter he wanted.

"Then it must be in the pocket of my new frock-coat," he said. "Just see how the villains tore it off my back."

It was, indeed, pretty well reduced to ribbons, and it was with difficulty I could ascertain which was a sleeve and which was a pocket. At last, after a long search, I said:—

"I cannot find your pipe, uncle, though I have searched every pocket carefully—stop, there's a hole in this one, perhaps it has fallen down—yes, here's something between the coat and the lining—huzza! huzza! 'tis the pawnbroker's ticket, doubled up!"

"God be praised!" cried my poor uncle, elevating his hands and eyes; "there is at least a glimmering of hope."

"Now," I said cheerfully, "keep up your courage, and leave the rest to me. I shall start for town immediately, and you will probably not see me again till the court opens to-morrow, when you must ask the president to allow me to defend you."

He squeezed my hand affectionately as the tears rolled down his cheeks, and exclaimed in a voice broken by sobs:—

"God bless you, my only comforter! Sure it was Providence that sent you to me in my extremity."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE COURT-MARTIAL.

By good luck, I caught the paymaster just as he was getting into bed. We had always been very good friends; for he was musical as well as myself, and had a splendid voice, with great good taste, but no science. When, however, I told him that a case of life and death required that I should be put in immediate possession of twenty pounds, he looked woefully blank; but as I had been generally very punctual in money matters, and gave him a bill on my brother for the amount, which he knew would be duly honoured, he at length produced two ten-pound notes, saying with a grim smile as he handed them to me, that he hoped I was going to run away with an heiress, as nothing else on earth could possibly warrant a poor ensign in borrowing such a mint of money.

Again I was in luck, for I caught the very last heavy coach, just on the point of starting from the "Bell" in Rochester; and springing up to the box seat, I was in due time trundled once more into the mighty metropolis, where, after a light supper, I went to bed, giving directions that I should be called at seven in the morning.

After a hasty breakfast, I was once more in the streets at the very unfashionable hour of eight o'clock; hurrying to the pawn-

broker's, and plaguing myself on the way with fancying a thousand accidents that might baulk my wishes. Nothing, however, intervened of an unfavourable nature: I obtained the precious deposit, and started again for Rochester, where I arrived soon after eleven. Time was becoming very critical; so I made the best of my way to the barracks, and arrived just as the members of the court-martial were sworn in, and the proceedings about to commence.

The court being held in the mess-room, several officers had sauntered in to look at the morning papers, which had just been delivered by the drum-major. My presence, therefore, attracted no notice, as I entered with the pistol-case, wrapped up in my handkerchief, under my arm. I took an opportunity of passing close in front of the prisoners, and tapped the case with my finger, as I gave my uncle a significant smile.

The effect was electrical; for having heard or seen nothing of me since the previous night, he had come to the conclusion that I had failed, and was even ashamed to appear in his defence. He, therefore, when I entered, stood amidst his brother culprits, his hands clasped together, and his head bent down, a perfect statue of mute despair. But when he saw me smile, and beheld under my arm the object of his most painful solicitude, he smiled in turn, raised himself to his full height, looked round with a free, unconcerned gaze, and stood the very model of a perfect soldier.

I was very glad to find that much sympathy was evinced, by many officers present, for the fate of poor O'Flaherty, whose well-known bravery had made him a general favourite; but when they heard the charges against him, they sighed, and gave him up as a lost man.

The president, having read the usual formula for the constitution of the court, Sergeant O'Flaherty was first put upon his trial; and the other prisoners, and all the witnesses, except one about to be examined, were ordered to withdraw.

The first charge, for drunkenness and rioting, was fully proved by two members of the London police, who had nothing to say in my uncle's favour, except that he was the most terrible fighter they had ever come across.

The second charge, for defalcation, was proved by his own books, and by the evidence of the captain of his company, which was certainly given with the best possible feeling, and mingled with many observations highly favourable to the prisoner.

The third charge, for making away with the pistols, depended solely upon the evidence of Captain Hopkins, which he gave with a degree of bitterness and malignity that excited universal disgust; and one or two young fellows near me expressed a wish to see the puppy himself tied up to the halberds.

The case having been closed for the prosecution, the president, with much feeling, addressed the prisoner, and said it was a pity to see so gallant a soldier reduced to such a dilemma; but he had heard the evidence against him, and the court was now ready to listen to what he could urge in his defence.

"Mr. President," said my uncle, with a degree of firmness and a

propriety of expression that I did not expect from him, "I am a poor unlettered man, and should only injure my own cause by pleading it myself; but, as I feel confident that much may be said in my favour, I shall esteem it an act of mercy if the court will permit my defence to be made by Ensign Blake, who has kindly offered his services on the occasion."

"This," said the president, "is a somewhat unusual request, and I must clear the court to take it into consideration."

"Mr. President," I then said, "I shall feel deeply indebted, if you will permit me to make one observation before you clear the court."

"Certainly," he replied.

"It is merely this," I continued, "that the prisoner, doubtless from a motive of delicacy towards me, has not stated to you that I am his nephew. This, however, is the fact: he is my mother's brother, and it is therefore that I most humbly entreat to be heard in his defence."

Here a fresh indication of astonishment appeared on the countenances of all present; and Alphabet Hopkins threw as much scorn into his insipid features as they were capable of expressing.

"That being the case," said the president, after a moment's consideration, "it may not, perhaps, be necessary to clear the court. What say you, gentlemen?"

"It is not at all necessary," replied one.

"There's no occasion in the world," said another.

"Mr. Blake," said the president, "the court has agreed to hear you in behalf of the prisoner; you will therefore state what you have to say in his defence, as briefly as may be consistent with the duty you have undertaken towards your client."

From my own experience, I knew that if brevity be the soul of wit, it is, *à fortiori*, the soul, and body too, of a military defence. I therefore avoided everything bordering on prolixity, and, according to the Horatian maxim, plunged at once *in medias res*.

"Mr. President and gentlemen," I said, "I shall, with your permission, begin with the last charge preferred against the prisoner, it being that which strikes at his well-known character for honesty and trustworthiness. He is charged with having fraudulently disposed of, or otherwise made away with, a case of pistols."

"Duelling-pistols," interrupted Hopkins, with a degree of rudeness that called down upon him the censure of the president.

"A case of duelling-pistols," I quietly resumed, "belonging to Captain Hopkins, who has deposed upon oath to the correctness of the charge."

"And I defy you to shake my evidence," said Hopkins, pertly.

"Captain Hopkins," said the president, "I insist on your being silent, or leaving the court; one or the other."

"In spite of this oath of Captain Hopkins," I resumed, "I maintain that the prisoner is perfectly guiltless of the crime; and here is the proof of my assertion."

I now unfolded the case, unlocked it, and placed it before the president, to the amazement of all present, and the bitter disap-

pointment of the baffled dandy, who would willingly have sacrificed his beloved duelling-pistols for the gratification of his revenge.

"I'd be glad to know," he cried abruptly, "where and how Mr. Blake got possession of those pistols?"

"That is a point we are not assembled to try," said the president quietly. "It is now only necessary for you to state whether these are the pistols you entrusted to Sergeant O'Flaherty."

"Yes, they are," said Hopkins. "But I want to know——"

"Are they in as good a condition," interrupted the president, "as when you placed them in his hands?"

"Yes, they are," replied Hopkins; "but for all that——"

"The court is satisfied with the evidence before it," said the president, "and requires no further on this charge."

Alphabet Hopkins locked his case, put it under his arm, and walked off, with a scowl of malignity at me, and another at my uncle.

"The next charge, Mr. President and gentlemen," I then resumed, "I trust I shall also be able to refute. It is founded on a balance of six pounds ten shillings, which appears against the prisoner in his own ledger, and in his own handwriting. This balance, however, so far from having embezzled or made away with, as stated in the charge, he now offers to the court through me" (here I handed the amount to the president). "I beg further to add, by his desire, that no delay whatever would have taken place in its repayment, were it not for the savage ill-treatment he received from a gang of scoundrels in London, the marks of which he still bears on various parts of his body; and which occasioned such mental confusion and loss of memory, that it was only last night he fully recollected in whose charge he had safely deposited his company's money and Captain Hopkins's pistols."

The president handed the money to the captain of my uncle's company, and asked him if that was the balance he claimed. The captain replied that it was perfectly correct; and added, he was happy to find that the opinion he had always entertained of Sergeant O'Flaherty was now so fully justified.

"With respect to the first charge, Mr. President and gentlemen," I continued, "the prisoner instructs me to plead guilty; and he throws himself on the mercy of the court. But in doing so, may I be permitted to observe that, though he certainly was drunk on the occasion specified, he was not, at the time, on any duty; he was not even with his regiment, but at a distance from it on furlough: under which circumstances it is not customary to scan the actions of a soldier with the rigid scrutiny that is called for in garrison or in the field.

"I also beg leave to observe, that the money which enabled him to commit this breach of decorum was prize-money gained by him at the capture of Monte Video; at the storming of which place he was the first man that mounted the breach, and the only survivor of the forlorn hope.

"May I beg the indulgence of the court further to observe, that the prisoner has ten wounds on his body, all received in general

action, or in storming parties, in Egypt, at the Cape of Good Hope, at Monte Video, and in the Peninsula; and that he has numerous testimonials of good conduct from general and other officers, which I beg to lay before the court."

This closed the proceedings; the court was cleared, and on the following day the adjutant read the finding and sentence on the garrison parade. Sergeant O'Flaherty was fully acquitted of the second and third charges preferred against him; he was found guilty of the first, and reduced to the rank and pay of a private sentinel, but strongly recommended to mercy by the court.

The commandant of the dépôt, a brave old soldier himself, said that, in confirming the proceedings of the court-martial, he felt a pleasure in acceding to the recommendation in favour of one who had hitherto acquitted himself so well. He hoped Sergeant O'Flaherty would profit by the severe lesson he had received: he might now join his company with his rank restored to him, and his character for honesty unblemished; a compliment which he hoped his future conduct would also soon enable him to pay to his sobriety.

The termination of this affair was not only very gratifying to my feelings, but it won me golden opinions from all classes in the garrison; where I was looked upon as a staunch sort of chap, that wouldn't desert a poor fellow in distress, from any feeling of false shame or silly pride. The president of the court-martial, a distinguished field-officer, always afterwards gave me a smile of recognition, and the soldiers, I fancied, threw more respectful feeling into their ordinary salute.

Even the worthy Hebrews, who were regarded as "sejourners," if not actually as denizens of the barrack-yard, seemed to consider, on a very nice calculation, that the transaction had raised me at least ten per cent. in public estimation; and Solomon Levi, as he stood chaffering with me one day for the purchase of some old lace and a pair of wings, said, in a moment of enthusiasm, that if at any time I should be in want of ten or fifteen pounds, he wouldn't hesitate, "s'help him Got!" to lend them to me on my own personal security. My military readers especially will be able to appreciate the value of this Hebrew compliment.

As for my poor uncle, he was brimful of affection, and was never tired of expressing his gratitude to me for saving him from the halberts, and restoring him to rank and character, when all others had given him up as a lost and ruined man. He frequently came to my barrack-room to have a talk with me about family affairs and other matters; and I never hesitated to receive him with as much consideration as if fortune had made no difference in our relative positions.

Indeed, my brother-officers evinced an equal delicacy towards him; for if any of them happened to come into my room when he was present, and he would get up to go away, they would immediately say: "Sit down, O'Flaherty; I want to have a talk with you." It was very seldom, however, that he would avail himself of the invitation; for he was not only afraid of compromising me, but he never forgot

that respect, so essential to discipline, which is deeply implanted in the breast of the British soldier.

With my own particular set, the affair being turned over in every possible point of view, it was agreed, *nem. con.*, that it was a very honourable, clever sort of thing; and that nothing could have been done in a more quiet, natural, and gentlemanly manner. They bestowed upon me the sobriquet of the "Judge Advocate," which stuck for many months after; and even the familiar term of Percy Blake merged for a time in the more novel and popular title.

There was, however, one dissentient voice to this general meed of approbation. Alphabet Hopkins could never forgive me for rescuing his victim from his grasp; for, with the tenacity of a little mind, he still cherished the revengeful feeling he had conceived against my poor uncle, though all reasonable ground for it had long disappeared. Indeed, he was frequently in the habit of evincing the ill-temper that devoured him, at mess and elsewhere; by throwing out innuendoes about poor relations, strange connexions, drunken soldiers, &c.; all of which I treated with the silent contempt they merited.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DUEL.

THE spring of 1810 was now approaching, and as the army under Sir Arthur Wellesley, recently created Viscount Wellington, was shortly to open a fresh campaign, every effort was being made to reinforce him. We had heard of the battle of Talavera before we left Walcheren, and many a heart was set throbbing for the Peninsula by the glorious details. We subsequently learned that Lord Wellington, finding it impossible to supply his troops with provisions, owing to the total failure of Spanish promises, had separated from Cuesta's army, which had always proved more an incumbrance than otherwise, and crossing the Tagus at Arzobispo, had retired upon his resources at Badajoz.

At this period, Napoleon was pouring in constant reinforcements over the Pyrenees, and strengthening his army-corps in every province of the Peninsula. The Spanish generals were overthrown in every direction, the French were everywhere victorious, and Spain once more lay nearly at their feet.

In this state of affairs Lord Wellington deemed it expedient to confine himself to the defence of Portugal, and his army accordingly recrossed the Tagus for that purpose; while the British Government, fortunately seeing where the battle of European freedom was really to be fought, sent out as many of the Walcheren battalions as could be made effective to Lisbon; and the Portuguese army in British pay was augmented to thirty thousand men, under the command of Marshal Beresford.

Amongst other preparations for the approaching struggle, a large

draught from Chatham received orders to prepare for service; and, to my great delight, it included two hundred and fifty men of my own regiment, and five officers, of whom I was one.

The bustle of preparation soon banished everything else from my mind; and the numerous expedients to which my man Conolly and I had recourse, to reduce my baggage to the most compact state of light-marching order, in which every possible convenience was to be comprised in the smallest possible space, gave me abundance of employment up to the very last moment.

The day was at length stated in garrison orders, when the draught, consisting of thirty officers and fifteen hundred men, was to march in two divisions for Portsmouth, to embark for those fields of glory to which we all looked forward with the glowing hopes of the soldier, and all the cheerful buoyancy of youth.

Our last night at the garrison mess was of course a jovial one. We sat down, fifty officers, who were never again perhaps to meet together in this world, and many of whom were likely to occupy foreign graves before the year, which had just commenced, should have accomplished its varied round.

In civil life, parting scenes, I believe, are generally of a sad and dreary character, but with us it was quite the reverse; for we enjoyed ourselves to a late hour, as if there was nothing in the world to think of but the pleasures of good-fellowship, and happy quarters. For my part, my spirits were unusually light and joyous; and I laughed, talked, and sang more than I recollect to have done on any occasion before or since.

At length the table began to thin, and towards midnight there were only a dozen good fellows left; principally those who were not included in the draught, and who seemed desirous of paying the last honours of the garrison to their departing comrades.

We had closed up to the president, and I had just concluded one of my old mess songs, when a young friend near me cried out,—

“I say, Judge-Advocate, old fellow, you’ll be singing that to the soft señoras before another month is over your head.”

“If so,” cried a voice opposite to me, “he’ll be better employed than in pleading bad causes.”

Forcibly struck by the voice and the observation, I looked across the table, and saw, for the first time, Alphabet Hopkins, who, in the changes of the evening, had got into his present position; whether intentionally or not I cannot say, though the former seemed the more likely from what followed. He looked flushed and excited with wine, and stared at me as if to give more significance to his remark. But I was perfectly cool and collected, having been particularly abstemious during the evening, though I appeared to drink as much as the rest. I therefore took no notice of what he said; but it was freely commented on by others.

“Nay, nay, Hopkins,” said one, “you of all men, should let that subject die in peace.”

“I only hope,” said another, “that I may have as good a cause, and as clever an advocate if I should ever be in such a predicament.”

"I think," said a canny Scot, "that bygones should be bygones, and I beg leave, Mr. President, to propose General Brizo."

"Gentlemen," said the president, "fill your glasses. General Brizo!"

This old peace-making toast was accordingly drunk in bumpers; but though Hopkins paid due honour to it like the rest, the wine seemed only to make him more fidgetty than before.

"By-the-by, Hopkins," said the president, "I have heard it rumoured that you are going on the India staff again."

"That I certainly am," said Hopkins; "for who can live like a gentleman in this beggarly country? Besides, I am cursedly bored with your stupid garrison towns, where one is so apt to meet strange connexions and country cousins. I'm devilish sorry I ever left the Sunderbunds."

"Ah," said Major Holmes, "he wants to get back again to Dum-Dum and the Delhi darbar."

"Much better," returned Hopkins, "than your frowsy old barracks, where one is mixed up with drunken old soldiers, *et hoc genus omne*."

"You'll enjoy your tiger-hunting again," observed Captain Philips, desirous of parrying this palpable hit at me.

"I wouldn't be an elephant in his path," said the president, "with that double rifle of his."

"I shoot snobs and elephants with the pistol," said Hopkins. "I keep the rifle for the Royal Bengals."

"Well," said a young sub, "I never heard of shooting elephants with a pistol before."

"'Tis true, however, my dear Allen," returned Hopkins; "for you must perceive there is no use in throwing away rifle-balls on such great hulking, vulgar scoundrels as elephants, any more than a delicate hint on obtuse intellects; as they only stick in their thick hides, or gross layers of muscular flesh, and but seldom reach a vital part."

"But how on earth do you shoot the elephants with pistols?" demanded Allen.

"Thus it is," replied Hopkins. "In the first place, a man must have thorough pluck—real *English* pluck," he repeated, laying an emphasis on the word, and looking significantly at me.

"Well, well," said Allen, "any pluck will do, for that matter, so it be genuine. What do you do next?"

"Then," said Hopkins, "I take my stand, and await the coming of the brute till he is within range. I then fix my eye on the spot to be hit;" here he actually did fix his eye upon me in a manner not to be mistaken, for it was now more than evident that he was desirous of picking a quarrel. "That spot," he continued, "is a small hollow just above the eye, through which I send my ball right into his brain; and the brute, however gross, or strong, or muscular he may be, falls dead at my feet."

The purport of all these sly hints and innuendoes was now so palpable, that common decency required me to bring the matter to a head, before he should be emboldened to utter anything more gross or outrageous. I therefore quietly observed, —

"These elephants, they say, are remarkably expert with their trunks, and can pick up a pin, or thread a needle with the unwieldy member."

"Well, sir," said Hopkins, roughly, "what of that?"

"Simply this," I replied; "suppose the elephant you meant to hit had a nine-pounder levelled at your own body, through the means of his trunk or otherwise, don't you think your English pluck might quail a bit?"

"English pluck never quails, sir," retorted Hopkins, looking as fierce as ten furies. "It doesn't want the Dutch stimulant that inspires the courage of your drunken uncle."

This being a *casus belli* not to be mistaken, I immediately replied in a calm and collected manner,—

"Captain Hopkins, if you ever again presume to utter a word in disparagement of my uncle, I'll wring the nose off your face."

The buzz of genial chat instantly ceased; a deep silence reigned around, and every eye was fixed on the belligerents, in expectation of the *dénouement*.

Hopkins had become ghastly pale; his lips quivered, he grasped his glass convulsively to convey it to his lips, but his hand shook so that the wine poured all down his snow-white vest and faultless shirt-front; till, dashing the glass in fragments on the table, he rushed out of the room.

"Gentlemen," said the President, "this is all *parish*, and of course goes no further."

"Of course not," replied several voices.

"It's all right," said one.

"Bravo, Judge Advocate!" cried another.

"Go it, Percy, my boy!" said a third.

I now rose, and also retired from the mess-room, having first whispered a request to Captain Philips, who sat next me, to follow me to my quarters.

"Well," said Philips, when he had got to my barrack-room, "it couldn't have been otherwise. I saw what was coming from the very beginning."

"I hope," I said, "you do not, therefore, disapprove of my conduct."

"Not in the least," he replied; "it was evidently forced upon you. Indeed, I must say you evinced a great deal of forbearance, and that seems to be the general opinion."

"Then I trust you will be kind enough to act for me in this matter," I continued.

"Certainly," he replied, "and I was going to say with pleasure; but the occasion may very well dispense with that hackneyed term."

Our conversation was soon after interrupted by a knock; and Philips going to the door, found it was Brevet-Major Jones, with a message from Hopkins. My friend accordingly accompanied him to settle preliminaries, while I occupied myself in preparing for the event.

In half-an-hour Philips returned, and said that everything was arranged for the morning.

"As your division marches at eight o'clock," said Philips, "we have settled the meeting to take place at daylight, between six and seven."

"Very well," I said, "I shall just have time to take a snooze before Conolly packs up my bed for the baggage-waggon."

"I never saw such a conceited fool as your adversary," observed Philips. "There he is, strutting up and down his barrack-room, vapouring about his favourite duelling-pistols; and boasting that in one month he had shot with them three Baboos, one Qui Hi, and a Griffin. I suppose he meant some wild beasts of the jungle."

"No, no," I replied, "those all belong to the *Bipes implumis* species. The Baboo is the Indian gentleman, the Griffin a Johnny Raw, and he himself is a specimen of the genus Qui Hi."

"I thought it was some cock-and-a-bull story like that of the elephant," observed Philips. "If we take his own word for it, he's the most bloodthirsty fellow in Europe."

"Line-crossers," I said, "are privileged to draw the long bow."

"The puppy has the impudence to say," continued Philips, "that in restoring his favourite pistols, you have given him a stick to break your own head."

"If that be the case," I replied, "I must give him a Roland for his Oliver; and, in diplomatic phrase, leave the decision to the God of battles."

Philips now looked at my pistols—the old brass-barrelled pair I had received as a final gift from my poor father on leaving him.

"Well," he said, laughing heartily at their homely appearance, "nobody will ever take you for a professed duellist, at all events."

"I trust not," I replied; "for I am by no means ambitious of the title. But I am decidedly of opinion that one man who kills a robber in defence of his property, is as much a murderer as another who shoots an adversary in defence of his honour, which is a thousand times more precious."

"Decidedly," said Philips; "but don't you think, my dear fellow, that I ought to go and provide you with a better pair?"

"On no account," I replied; "the secret is already in the keeping of too many; and I wouldn't for the world that any cause of prevention should originate on my side."

"You're quite right," said Philips; "but I doubt if so exquisite a Qui Hi will condescend to be shot by such vulgar bull-dogs."

Philips having wished me a good night, I went to bed and slept soundly till half-past five; when, being called by my faithful Conolly, I dressed, got into a chaise with my friend, and we drove to the ground, which was a field some little distance from Rochester, on the banks of the Medway. We arrived a few minutes before the appointed time; but had not waited long, when another chaise drove up, containing Hopkins, his friend, and his regimental surgeon.

It was a cold, damp morning in the beginning of February, and we were all muffled up in great coats, except my adversary, whose foppery was displayed, even on such an occasion as the present. He wore a light blue and silver cavalry jacket, which set off the sym-

metry of his person to great advantage; while, as he jumped from the chaise, humming an air with great nonchalance, and went towards his position in a sort of waltz step, he took a white cambric handkerchief from his pocket; twirling this about two or three times, he tied it round his waist with an affectation of boyish levity that was perfectly absurd.

Twelve paces being measured, we took our ground, and our seconds, having loaded and delivered to us our pistols, retired a short distance; it being arranged, as we were both crack shots, that Major Jones should simply give the word "fire!" when he thought it most convenient to do so. We were not, however, left long in suspense; the word was given, both pistols were instantly raised, and went as one, and both took effect.

I had scarcely pulled the trigger of mine, when I felt a shock in my upper left arm, as if it had been suddenly wrenched out of the socket; but I had presence of mind enough to stand as if nothing had happened, while my adversary was on the ground, groaning in a most dismal manner.

Every one ran to the fallen man; who, after the surgeon had examined the nature of his wound, was carried to his chaise, and driven slowly off, his heavy moans striking upon my young heart like the knell of departing happiness. I was badly wounded myself, but I felt it not; I wasted not a thought upon my own safety, or probable sufferings: all my anxiety was for my unhappy antagonist; and I felt such a sudden gush of intense pity and remorse, that it was by the most powerful effort I restrained the tears that were almost bursting from my eyes.

Philips came towards me with an appearance of hilarity that I could see was feigned, and said, with an attempt at cheerfulness, —

"You have spoiled his dancing for some time, at least; he is badly hit in the hip. But, good heavens! you are bleeding—you are hit yourself! Well, I must say you take it as if you were used to it. Ay—there it is, within an inch of your heart. But it's your own fault, my dear fellow; he couldn't miss you, for you stood full front to him."

"That's a way we have on the sod," I replied, with a faint smile; "there we always show at least a fair front to the enemy."

"Then it's a custom more honoured in the breach than the observance," said Philips drily. "In future, pray take a lesson from Alphabet Hopkins; you saw how beautifully he stood sideways, screwing in his stomach, and leaving no more surface than the edge of a deal board. I doubt much if you'd have hit him at all, especially with that brazen bull-dog of yours, if the puppy hadn't tied a white handkerchief round his waist."

"That's it," I replied. "With all his science, he committed a capital error; for my eye was irresistibly attracted by the white handkerchief."

I was now bleeding pretty fast, and getting weak. We therefore got into our chaise, and started for the barracks; but when I arrived at my quarters, I found them empty, for I had kept the matter so

profound a secret from Mr. Conolly, that he had placed my baggage on the waggons, and started with the rear guard at least half an hour before.

In this dilemma, Philips took me to his quarters, put me into his own bed, and sent for one of the *depôt* surgeons, who proceeded forthwith to extract the ball, which had lodged in the muscular part of the arm, and gave me considerable pain; causing, also, such an effusion of blood, that I became excessively weak and sick at the stomach.

I was very anxious, notwithstanding, to get up, and march with the division; but the surgeon declared he wouldn't answer for my life, if I stirred even out of bed for a fortnight. This intelligence nearly drove me mad; but when, a few minutes after, I heard the division marching off, and the band playing "The girl I left behind me," I was almost delirious with vexation and disappointment.

My friends, however, rallied round me; told me there was no use in fretting, that patience was the order of the day, and that every sigh I heaved added twenty-four hours to my confinement. I fortunately had sense enough left to acknowledge the truth of their observations, and I therefore kept myself quiet, not to retard my cure. But in a few days intelligence arrived of the sailing of the transports for Lisbon. This threw me into another paroxysm of impatience; and I bitterly bewailed my fate at seeing the glory with which I had so long fed my hopes, so unexpectedly snatched from my too eager grasp.

I was obliged, however, to submit to that inexorable destiny which not only mocks all human hopes, and baffles all human efforts, but, by showing us that we are the mere slaves of necessity, deprives us even of the merit of patience, and the comfort of philosophy. To kill time, in this dilemma, as well as to prepare myself for future operations, I now renewed my acquaintance with the majestic old Castilian; and took lessons from a young Spaniard, who had been driven from his country by the atrocious Godoy, for loving it "not wisely, but too well." With him I read and conversed a good deal during the progress of my cure; and the facility I obtained from this regular practice was of essential service to me much sooner than I expected.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BAY OF BISCAY.

I WAS at length sufficiently convalescent to quit the confinement of my barrack-room, to take air and exercise; and the joy I felt on the occasion was so great, that I sincerely pitied my adversary, who was still in bed, and likely to continue so for some months to come; the extraction of the ball having been a difficult and troublesome affair,

while the excessive irritation of his mind had thrown him into a fever.

One morning, as I was lounging about in the tepid warmth of a March sun, a brother officer came running up, exclaiming,—

“Well, Judge Advocate! I have good news for you.”

“What is it, my dear Goodlad?” I demanded.

“I know,” he replied, “that you are pining for your regiment, and in a terrible hurry to go and get knocked on the head; so I wrote to my sailor brother to ask him if he could help you to a passage.”

“You excellent fellow, with a most appropriate name!” I exclaimed; “what did your sailor brother say in reply?”

“Here is his letter,” said Goodlad. “He informs me that he sails for Lisbon in three days hence, with despatches and a mail; and says, like a sea-going monster as he is, that if you can rough it in a four-gun cutter, and will bear a hand and clap on canvas, he’ll trundle you over to that dirty city, in the twirling of a handspike.”

I was so delighted, that I warmly embraced my young friend, and immediately wrote an application for permission to join my regiment at my own expense, a request that was granted without any difficulty. Having no baggage left, through Mr. Conolly’s great attention to that part of his duty, my preparations were soon made; and, before I started for my regiment, I passed one more pleasant evening with my friends, at the garrison mess, now reduced to twenty members: being overwhelmed on every side with good wishes and kind predictions of success, and not a few hints and inuendos of how I was to conduct myself with *las buenas muchachas*.

It was a fine night as I sallied alone from the mess to seek my barrack-room. All was calm and silent; and the full moon, cloudless and serene, shed a brilliant splendour over the heavens and the earth, as if anxious to bind them together in one bond of peace, unity, and love. My heart seemed subdued as I looked upwards; every feeling of hostility and pride that may have lurked there, even unknown to myself, vanished under the mild influence of the scene; and a glow of intense brotherly affection filled my breast for all the race of man.

In this mood I was passing the quarters of my late antagonist, which were on the ground-floor. All was silent within; but there was a light burning, which indicated the watchfulness of the sick-chamber; and his servant was leaning against the outer door-post, looking up at the moon, just as I had been myself, a few moments before.

A sudden impulse induced me to stop, and I said to his servant,—
“Jenkins, how is your master?”

“He’s getting on nicely, now, sir,” replied Jenkins; “but he has had a severe bout of it.”

“Is he asleep or awake?” I asked.

“He was dozing just now, sir,” replied Jenkins; “but he doesn’t sleep long, for he still suffers a good deal.”

“I am going to join my regiment in the morning,” I said. “Could I step in, and bid him good-bye?”

"Certainly, sir," said Jenkins; "why not?"

I accordingly walked in to look, with a feeling very remote from hostility, on the wreck I myself had made; in defence of that honour, which is not only the air we breathe, but the very bread we eat, wanting which we die a living death of obloquy and shame: while in defending it, at the risk of existence, we incur the anathema of all who arrogate to themselves a monopoly of virtue. Singular paradox of human thought!

Hopkins was lying on his left side, the position to which his wound had so long confined him. His handsome features were pale and bloodless, his cheeks hollow, his eyes, which were closed, sunk deep in his head, while a quick, uncertain breathing still indicated the presence of fever. There was an open letter in his right hand, from a mother, perhaps, or a sister; or it might have some relation to a miniature that lay upon his table, for an expression of sadness seemed mingled in his features with one of pain.

I sat down by his bedside, the curtains of which were thrown back; and as I gazed on the motionless figure before me, my eyes filled with tears, and I took him gently by the hand. Hopkins slowly unclosed his eyes, and looked at me; but, as if uncertain of the correctness of his vision, he put up his hand to shade his brow from the light of the candles that were burning on the table, and then exclaimed, with an accent of surprise,—

"Good heavens! Can it be you, Blake?"

"My dear Hopkins," I said, pressing his feverish hand, "I hope you will pardon this intrusion; but I start for the Peninsula in the morning, and couldn't go without bidding you good-bye."

"Well," he exclaimed, after a moment's pause, "Blake, you never conquered me till now; but this is an act of manly kindness that I shall never forget."

"Then I am truly happy," I returned, "that I have at last taken a step to which my wishes have often prompted me."

"So am I," he replied; "for my mind, which has long been agitated by conflicting feelings about you, is now at rest; and I feel assured that your generous visit will do me more good than all the attentions of our worthy doctor."

"It will be a great consolation to me," I said, "where I am going, that we part friends."

"As truly and sincerely," he replied, "as once we were enemies. But I am sorry to see your arm still in a sling; they told me you were quite well."

"I shall soon lay it by altogether," I answered, "for I have been too long indulged in luxury and idleness."

"Would to heaven I were going with you to-morrow," said poor Hopkins, with a sigh, "for I begin to feel that my whole life has been nothing but idleness."

We parted soon after, with warm and sincere wishes for each other's happiness.

"Good-bye, my dear fellow," I said, pressing his hand; "I hope we shall meet again under happier auspices."

"God bless you, Percy Blake!" he replied, returning my pressure. "If you ever come to India, be sure you inquire for Alphabet Hopkins."

This being the first time my quondam antagonist had ever condescended, in any way, to notice his well-known sobriquet, I hailed it as a return to a more wholesome and unaffected mode of thinking; and my mind being relieved by this interview from a mountain of anxiety, I started, in the morning, by the mail for Falmouth, where I arrived just as "Blue Peter" was run up to the gaff of his Majesty's cutter, *Seagull*.

I lost no time in getting on board, where I was received by Lieutenant Goodlad, the commander, and his brother officers, who made me as comfortable as the limited means of so small a vessel would allow. They had laid in additional sea-stock, with all sorts of creature comforts, both liquid and solid; and I had my choice of a berth or a hammock, giving, of course, a preference to the latter. They seemed all jolly good fellows, especially Goodlad himself, who was, without exception, the most obliging, good-tempered fellow I ever met with. In short, with "all appliances and means to boot," we had every reason to anticipate a most delightful passage.

On Wednesday, at noon, the 23rd of March, we got under weigh, and stood our course for Lisbon with a leading wind. But we had scarcely got of the chaps of the Channel, when a heavy gale came on from the north-west; and the appearance of the weather was such, on Sunday evening, that the mainsail was furled, the trysail set, and everything made snug for the night.

Being "only a lodger," as the song says, I turned into my hammock immediately after supper, leaving my messmates to contend with the spirit of the storm. There I lay for some time, between waking and sleeping; listening to the roaring of the wind, the dashing of the waves, the creaking of the bulkheads, the boatswain's pipe, and the rumbling of the carronades, not taut enough in their breachings; till the din at length became so infernal, that I got up, wrapped my boat-cloak around me, and poked my head up the cabin hatchway, to have a look at the state of affairs.

It was very evident that March, however it came in, was determined to go out like a lion; for the sky had assumed a wild and most threatening aspect, and the billows were tossing their heads on high, in a manner which, to the practised eye of the mariner, indicated a tempest of no ordinary violence. It accordingly came on, as the darkness of the night increased, with a fury calculated to shake the stoutest heart, and to appal the oldest seaman.

The cutter, however, had plenty of sea-room, being then about two hundred miles to the westward of the Lizard, in the Bay of Biscay. But the wind blew through the night with such steady and terrific violence, repeatedly carrying away the trysail sheets: and the sea rolled in such mountainous billows, that early on Monday morning all hands were turned up, and the cutter was hove to under topsail, and close-reefed foresail and jib.

Under this very reduced canvas, the *Seagull* lay to for some time,

until a heavy sea, which struck her forward, carried away some of her bulwarks; and it was found necessary soon after to close-reef the trysail. While all hands were on deck engaged in this operation, a tremendous sea struck the cutter amidships, and threw her on her beam ends; sweeping with terrific violence into the foaming billows, four-and-twenty officers and seamen, three of her four guns, the tanks, binnacles, and compasses: shivering the mast into three pieces; which, with sails, rigging, spars, hatches, bulwarks, and everything in short that came in contact with its irresistible fury, were swept, in one undistinguishable mass of destruction, into the yawning gulf that seemed ready to devour them.

Sixteen fine fellows, of the four-and-twenty, who were thus plunged into the foaming abyss, were lost for ever: the remaining eight, including two officers, were thrown back by the returning wave upon the deck, without any exertion of their own; perfectly unconscious, so rapid was the occurrence of the imminent danger they had incurred, and their most singular escape.

But, though once more on board the cutter, their situation, like our own, seemed as perilous as ever; for the sea descended in torrents down the now-uncovered hatchways, the ballast was thrown up and tossed in all directions, the chain cable was pitched out of its locker, and everything on board was capsized, and flung out of its place. In short, the utter destruction of the vessel seemed inevitable; for the sea made a clear breach over her deck, filling the hold and cabins, and tearing away, with irresistible fury, everything that opposed it.

Still, however, even in the jaws of destruction, there is something in the heart of man, especially of a British sailor, that prompts him to struggle boldly with his fate; and it was this indomitable principle alone that saved the poor remnant of the cutter's crew. Being freed from the heavy weight of her mast and rigging, which were now tossing about on the billows, the *Seagull* righted and regained her buoyancy; but the sea was still pouring in torrents down the uncovered hatchways, and every moment increased the probability of her being water-logged.

To prevent this catastrophe, we all laboured incessantly to cover the hatchways with hammocks, beds, blankets, &c.: but these being constantly washed off, the water still had free admission; till, bereft of almost every hope, we fancied that the cutter was settling fast by the stern, and expected her every moment to founder. Still, we left nothing untried that might conduce to our safety; and the pump-gear having been washed away, we commenced with determined patience, to bale out the water with a tin kettle which did not hold more than a gallon, and was almost the only utensil that was left in the vessel.

This was, indeed, an arduous and disheartening task; but "courage mounteth with occasion," and the maxim of the British tar is "Never say die!" Fortunately, the hull of the vessel was uninjured; consequently, there were no leaks, and the cutter lay pretty high out of the water. It was, therefore, hoped that by patient perseverance the body of water she had shipped might be reduced; and, in fact, after

labouring hard for four-and-twenty hours, it was sufficiently diminished to allow us a little respite from the labour of baling.

Having so far gained on the enemy, the jib was rigged on the stump of the mast which remained, to serve for a mainsail: a foresail was converted into a jib, an old boat's sail was set up for a mizen; and under this wretched canvas the head of the *Seagull* was kept to her course, as nearly as we could judge, without chart, compass, and quadrant, which had all been swept out and buried in the remorseless deep. But the gale, though it still prevailed with unabated fury, continued happily to blow from one point, which, being fair, permitted the cutter to remain on one tack; a most favourable circumstance, for had she been compelled to go on another, she would, owing to the ballast having shifted, in all probability have capsized.

Matters being thus brought to something "ship-shape" like, we were enabled to look about, and contemplate the ruin that surrounded us. Two of the officers, who were below when the sea had struck the vessel, had been fairly washed out of their cabins, and forced upon deck with nothing but their shirts on. But whatever ideas of drollery may have been excited by their forlorn aspect, they were soon checked by the appearance of a quantity of blood, staining some flags on the quarter-deck; from which we drew the melancholy conclusion, that some of our gallant messmates had been crushed to death by the falling spars, before they had been washed off the deck of the vessel. Our sympathy was soon after still further excited on beholding the bodies of two or three of them floating at some distance on a portion of the wreck, stark and rigid in the grasp of death.

The cold was now intense; and the scanty covering which had been spared to us, poor souls, being thoroughly drenched, only served to enhance the severity of the weather. Towards evening, however, the wind having moderated a little, we were enabled to light a fire, the caboose fortunately not having been carried away; and, as another piece of good fortune, the cook, who has generally a secret locker of his own, produced a leg of mutton, a sheep's head, and a cold ham. Of the former we made some very passable soup in the ship's coppers; and Lieutenant Goodlad having produced five or six bottles of brandy from his secret locker, we made a supper worthy of the gods; for, though our biscuit was thoroughly soaked with salt water, we improved it wonderfully by an infusion of Cognac.

On Wednesday, the 30th, a brig hove in sight to leeward, towards evening; and, as we drifted down towards her, we fired our only remaining gun, and thus attracted the notice of the stranger, which proved to be a Frenchman. Having neared the *Seagull*, the captain offered to send a boat for us, if we would abandon the wreck, saying he could do nothing for, or with, the hull. The unconquerable pride of a British tar, however, here evinced itself: Lieutenant Goodlad refused to abandon his ship so long as her planks held together, while, with three cheers, we all declared our resolution to stick by him to the last; and the Frenchman, finding it useless to urge the matter, filled his sails and stood his course.

About ten o'clock on the same night, an English brig from Liverpool fell in with us, and ranging up alongside, the captain proffered his assistance. This being accepted, he ordered a boat to be lowered, and two men to get into it to board the *Seagull*, and see what could be done for our preservation. But, alas! the fore-tackle by which the boat was suspended unhappily gave way, and boat and men were instantly engulfed in the mountainous billows. The master of the brig, notwithstanding this serious loss, hoisted a lantern at his fore-top, and lay-to all night in the midst of the gale, to render assistance if possible in the morning.

Thus passed the melancholy night of Wednesday; but, bad as our prospects then were, the morning brought us an addition to our cares. Towards daylight, if that could be called light which was only "darkness visible," the gale increased, with a heavy sea and thick hazy weather; the English brig being considerably to leeward, but on a wind, and making towards the wreck. The *Seagull* also bore away towards the brig; but, unhappily, the gale increased with tremendous violence, accompanied with terrible hailstorms, and we soon lost sight of the brig altogether.

In this forlorn condition, our commander had now no other remedy than to make, as well as he could judge, for the nearest part of the Spanish coast; even at the risk of falling into the hands of the French, who were in possession, generally, of the northern sea-ports. This was a bad look out for one whose glowing hopes of commencing the campaign with some brilliant success were likely to be soon extinguished in the gloom of a French prison. But it was ungenerous of me to think only of myself, for my gallant companions were in the same predicament: moreover, there was no help for it in our utterly crippled condition; and we must either run for the nearest shore, or perish miserably in the gulf that was yawning to swallow us.

We had not kept our present course many hours, for we were going bodily before the wind, when a headland, bearing due south, loomed in the distance, raising its bluff bulwark against the waves of the Atlantic. As we neared it, Goodlad, who was well acquainted with the coast, made it out to be Corunna, from the deep indentation comprising the three bays of Corunna, Betanzos, and Ferrol. At daylight, on Monday, the 4th of April, we had got in so well with the land, that we were distinguished by the people on shore, who at first took us for a fishing-smack; but having fired off the last shot we had "in the locker," as a signal of distress, a government vessel was sent out to our assistance. This having taken us in tow, we were soon brought in to the harbour; to our own great delight, and the wonder and admiration of innumerable spectators who crowded the Marina.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SPANISH POSADA.

A PARTY of *Aduaneros*, or custom-house troops, was immediately sent on board the *Seagull*, to prevent smuggling: a very needless precaution on the part of the authorities, seeing that our only cargo was salt water; a great quantity of which, with all our baling, we had not been able to return to its parent bed.

Nothing of our poor cutter now remained but the bare hull, and the stumps of her broken mast and bowsprit; while the deck was strewn with fragments of everything, in every state of dilapidation; hats, boots, clothes, charts, lanterns, crockery-ware, &c., &c., scattered about in hopeless confusion, and irretrievably ruined. The bulwarks were all torn to atoms, the boats gone, and not a vestige left of rigging, spars, hatches, &c., &c. The ship's journals, log-books, and books of sailing directions, were all cut to pieces below, by the shifting to and fro of the shingle ballast which pervaded every part of the vessel, and they came up eventually, piece-meal, through the pumps. A small portion of the mail was preserved; but the great mass of it, comprising newspapers, government despatches of the utmost importance, love-letters complaining of silence, and duns threatening arrest, was actually reduced, by the long rolling process it had undergone, to *papier maché*—many a precious secret, and fond, confiding thought, being now nothing better than pap.

We lost no time in making ourselves acquainted with the state of affairs on shore, and learned, to our infinite satisfaction, that there was not a single Frenchman at Corunna; the garrison having been recently withdrawn, to swell the numbers of the "Army of Portugal," with which Massena was now about to overwhelm the British troops, and drive the hated "leopards" into the sea.

Still, however, the Spanish authorities in Corunna were placed in a dilemma by our unwelcome advent; for, if they ventured to show any particular interest in our welfare, the French would doubtless remember it to their cost on their return; and they could not well refuse sympathy and assistance to the distressed officers and seamen of a power that was making such gigantic efforts to free their country from its Gallic thralldom. In this predicament they adopted a *mezzo termine*, and came to the prudent resolution of ignoring our existence altogether. Thus we lay in the harbour, like a waif that nobody would own; while even the manorial rights of flotsom and jetsam were abandoned, from an apprehension of being embroiled by meddling with one or other of the contending belligerents.

Fortunately, we were not starved in this nondescript position of ours; for we had abundant supplies of all descriptions from the shore, duly paying for the same. We also obtained, on application, another indulgence, viz., permission to visit the tomb, or rather the

grave, of our gallant countryman, Sir John Moore; but even this was by moonlight, and under the most vigilant supervision of the police.

In this posture of affairs, Goodlad resolved to await the result of an application to Lisbon for assistance, which he was going to make through the Spanish post. But as this channel of communication was so proverbially tardy, if not altogether unsafe, as to involve the probable delay of many weeks, I came to a resolution, quite worthy of so sage a person as myself: this was to seek my way through Galicia to the Portuguese frontier, whence I thought I should find no difficulty in reaching the head-quarters of the British army.

It was in vain the worthy Goodlad, and his few remaining brother-officers, represented to me the absurdity and absolute madness of such a course; the country being overrun by parties of the enemy in all directions, while the Spaniards themselves were by no means trustworthy. My obstinate self-will was proof against all their kindness; and I was determined not to lose the chance of some glorious action at the opening of the campaign, through a vague apprehension of possible danger.

Accordingly, on a fine evening in the early part of April, I parted affectionately from the worthy fellows, and bade adieu to the *Seagull*, which had certainly been a bird of ill omen to me; my only wardrobe being what I actually stood in, viz., a sailor's jacket, check shirt, Russia-duck trousers, and a natty sou'-wester stuck rakishly on the side of my head. But my spirits were buoyant, my heart was stout; and I recollected, as I went along, the philosophy I had imbibed from my poor father's campaigning songs, as I sat on his knee in my infancy.

Exclusive of my aforesaid sea-toggery, all the worldly wealth the gale had left me was three doubloons. Goodlad wanted, right or wrong, to double the amount, but I knew they ought to be sufficient to take me to my regiment, and that more would only subject me to robbery or assassination. I therefore gratefully declined his offer, and the worthy fellow was quite annoyed; for, with his sea-going prejudices, he looked upon my enterprise as if I were actually going a thousand miles into an African desert. I had also my brass-barrelled pistols, and my commission, a tough piece of parchment, bearing the signature of George the Third; and a very queer one it was at that period, consisting of a rigmarole scrawl, more like a nest of grasshoppers than George Rex. I was offered fifty guineas for it the other day by a collector of royal autographs, but refused, being determined that it shall descend as an heir-loom to my latest posterity.

It was dusk when I landed on the Marina, and I chose this hour expressly to avoid observation, having no passport; for the Spanish authorities absolutely declined having anything whatever to do with the crew of the *Seagull*, who were even more "tabooed" at Corunna, than the "Ancient Mariner" himself. The plan I had laid down for my guidance, was to seek some unpretending *posada*, where the *arrieros*, or muleteers, are accustomed to put up; as, by means of

one of these gentry, of whose sagacity and trust-worthiness I had heard many favourable accounts, I might succeed in finding my way to the Portuguese frontier. I accordingly proceeded in my search, making as few inquiries as possible, to avoid exciting troublesome curiosity.

The streets of old Corunna were, like those of most Spanish towns, narrow, winding and dirty; and the houses resembled gloomy prisons, from the huge iron grating that invariably guards the windows of the ground-floor. This floor was also appropriated as a stable, or cow-house; or, if the building belonged to an *hidalgo* of any pretension, it was a large, vacant, dirty hall. There were very few people about, even at this early hour, and the streets, for want of lamps, were dismally dark. I stumbled on, however, till I had traversed the whole town, and made many ineffectual attempts to procure a lodging; but I was a stranger, and nobody would take me in; while, as every one to whom I vainly applied, returned my *Buenas noches!* with the customary *Vaya usted con Dios!* it sounded, in spirit at least, wonderfully like *Vaya usted con demonio!*

Thus baffled, I began to contemplate the agreeable prospect of passing the night in the streets; while, to mend the matter, it came on to rain so furiously that I was speedily wet to the skin. At length, an old woman, feeling for my situation, offered to show me a *posada*, where I should probably be received; and, under the guidance of this ancient sibyl, I proceeded to a remote and dreary part of the town, the houses of which looked in a very old and tumble-down condition. Into one of these, which certainly had a most gloomy and sinister aspect, I was ushered, and found the lower apartment filled with mules and bullocks: in their agreeable society I was left for a quarter of an hour in the dark; while the whole building re-echoed with the shrill voice of my conductress, as she endeavoured to attract to our assistance some one belonging to the *casa*.

At length, her repeated cries seemed to produce some effect; for a glimmering light, gradually descending a rickety staircase, displayed to my longing eyes a squalid-looking female, enveloped in rags and dirt, who at a safe distance demanded:

"Quien esta ahí?"*

"Gente de paz,"† replied my fair friend, in a voice which, in spite of her assertion, had something warlike in its tones.

The captivating figure of the stranger now ventured to descend a few steps further; when, having ascertained the object of my visit, she looked at me for some seconds with a scrutinizing glance, and demanded in a very unmusical voice:—

"Es usted Ingles?"‡

"No," I replied, with much presence of mind, "I am an Irishman."

"Pues usted es Cristiano,"§ she exclaimed, with something like a smile.

* "Who is there?"

† "Are you an Englishman?"

‡ "Friends,"—literally, "people of peace."

§ "Then you are a Christian."

"Certainly, señora patrona, muy Cristiano," I replied, as I made the sign of the cross to convince her of the fact.

This immediately wrought a favourable change in both ladies, one of whom exclaimed, "Ave Maria purisima!"* and the other, "Sin pecado concebida!"† I was then invited to ascend—a welcome summons, which I gladly obeyed, after heartily thanking my venerable guide.

I followed mine hostess up three flights of steps, avoiding with caution the numerous apertures which age and decay had made in the time-worn fabric, until we arrived at the *cocina*, or kitchen, which was at the very summit of the building, and served also as parlour and drawing-room to the numerous guests who frequented this delectable establishment.

Into this Cyclop's den I was now ushered; but whether it was inhabited by any other beings than myself I could only ascertain by the confused sound of many voices, so dense was the atmosphere, and so thick the volumes of smoke that rolled about, and increased the blackness of the walls and ceiling, which were incrustated with the dirt of half a century.

I had no sooner taken a seat, in order to dry my clothes, by a fire that was composed of huge logs of pine and cork tree, over which some iron pots and saucepans were hissing and sending forth a savoury odour, than the *patron*, or landlord, approaching with scant ceremony, desired to see my passport. Without any hesitation I pulled out my commission, and displayed it to his admiring gaze; but though it was all Greek and Arabic to him, yet, being printed on vellum and bearing the War-office seal, he took it for granted that it was all right, and invited me to draw near the supper-table.

This unsophisticated festal board consisted of two rough planks, rudely joined together and supported upon trestles, or cross-legs; it was unincumbered with anything in the shape of a tablecloth, which gave it an air of primitive simplicity. This was very much enhanced by the homely aspect of a dozen wooden platters, and spoons of the same material, with some horn drinking-cups, placed before as many very hungry guests, for such I conjectured them to be, from the eager glances with which they hailed the appearance of a huge earthen pan filled with a smoking *puchero*, or, as we call it in England, "*olla podrida*," that was now placed on the centre of the supper-table.

My new companions appeared to be very intimate with each other, and, indeed, connected together by some tie either of brotherhood or profession. They were dressed in the ordinary Gallician costume, and wore their Montero caps at table, some decorated with a red plume and others with a peacock's feather.

Though they all seemed very familiar with each other, they paid more than ordinary respect to one who sat opposite to me, and whom they always addressed as Don Pedro: but amongst themselves they rarely used any other terms than *hermano* (brother) or *amigo* (friend); with the addition of their Christian name, or some distinctive appel-

* "Hail, Mary, most pure!"

† "Conceived without sin."

lation, derived from personal quality, or defect, or peculiar incident of private history. They also, in confidential chat, frequently called their chief *Pero Votero* (Swearing Peter) or *el Tío del Diablo* (the devil's uncle). This Don Pedro was a stout-built, stern-looking fellow, with huge mustachios, and a gash in his left cheek, that seemed to draw the eye on that side down lower than its companion; but there was, at the same time, a look of frank hardihood about him which won my regard at the first glance.

I had time to make these observations while the *puchero* was going round: for every one put in his spoon and helped himself either to ham and chicken, turkey pullet, hare, wild fowl, beef, mutton, or veal—for of all these ingredients was this noble dish composed; seasoned with chillies, onions, tomatoes, garlic, and other condiments, equally savoury and *appétissant*. This being the first time I had seen the boasted *puchero*,* I was very much interested in its favour; and when it came to my turn I followed the example of my companions with no niggard hand: in short, all were soon occupied in the most satisfactory manner; and the general process of mastication was only interrupted by occasional visits to the pipe of a *bota*, or leathern wine-bag, which circled quickly from mouth to mouth round the table, to the evident diminution of its racy contents.

In the midst of our enjoyment, the door opened, and in walked a gaunt, sinister-looking fellow, who was evidently a “late” member of the supper-party, from the look of disappointment with which he gazed on the fully occupied table, where no place had been kept for him, and the expression of surprise in which he vented his anger.

“Carajo!”† he exclaimed; “no tiene lugar para mí!”

All, however, seemed too well employed to pay attention to the new comer, who, seeing that he must help himself or wait till the others were done, made directly towards me, the only stranger in company, and taking me rudely by the shoulders, cried out,—

“Hola! señor paisano, vaya usted con mil demonios!”‡

I instantly started up, enraged at being thus interrupted in my first acquaintance with the *ne plus ultra* of Spanish cookery, and exclaiming, “Go to the devil yourself!” I gave the fellow a push that sent him staggering into the lap of the *patrona*, who was resting from her labours, and now opened with a volley of abuse upon her unintentional visitor.

All who witnessed the incident laughed at the drollery of the catastrophe; but the hungry Gallegan, exclaiming with immense volubility, “Carajo! Cojones! Demonio! San Antonio!” grasped his knife and ran at me, evidently intent on avenging his disgrace in the most approved Peninsular fashion. Before he had time to effect his purpose, however, I drew one of my brazen bulldogs from my

* This famous Spanish dish derives its name from the pipkin or vessel in which it is cooked.

† This is the invariable, but untranslatable Spanish oath. It is pronounced *careho*.

‡ “Go to a thousand devils, peasant!”

breast, and presenting it in his face, swore I would blow his brains out if he did not instantly put up his weapon.

The fellow looked at me for a moment, as if uncertain what to do; but I repeated my threat in a still more determined manner, till finally, with a look of diabolical malice, he did as he was bid, and shuffled in amongst some of his companions, who made room for him, muttering to himself the thousand and one different ways in which he would put me to death on the first convenient opportunity.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PERO VOTERO.

As the harmony of the meeting was evidently interrupted by this serio-comic incident, and a few angry looks were directed towards me, I made something in the shape of a general apology for a disturbance of which I had been the innocent cause, but trusted the *senores caballeros* would do me the justice to acknowledge that I was not the aggressor.

“Es verdad!” cried Don Pedro, striking the table with his fist. “Cuerpo del diablo! el chico tiene razon!”*

This produced so evident a change in my favour, that, with a lively feeling of gratitude for the timely intervention, I poured out a horn of wine in the English fashion, and drank it off to the health of my generous backer. At the same time, more inadvertently than otherwise, I made him the Masonic sign of brotherhood.

“Toma! Toma!” cried Don Pedro, returning the signal; “con que usted es uno de nosotros!”†

“Sin dubio!” I exclaimed. “Vivan los valorosos Españoles!”

“Que viva! Que viva usted, caballero!” cried several voices, while Don Pedro grasped my hand across the table, and we were thenceforward friends and brothers. The remainder of the supper passed off with great glee and good fellowship; and even Manuelo, with whom I had had the fracas, was prevailed on to offer me his hand, which I shook cordially.

After the *puchero* had entirely disappeared, for it was considered unmanly to quit the scene of action before, we drew round the fire-place to enjoy a social chat until bed-time.

I attached myself especially to Don Pedro, who seemed gratified at the preference; and handing him my cigar-case (stored with right Havannahs by the worthy Goodlad), a compliment which is never thrown away in Spain, we entered into confidential chat a little retired from the remainder of the company, till, by degrees, the natural reserve of the Spanish character had entirely vanished.

“Apparently,” said Don Pedro, “you belong to the English vessel so nearly wrecked on this maldita coast of ours.”

* “Body of the devil! the lad is right!”

† “Then you are one of us!”

"I came out in her," I replied; "but I am an officer in the British army, going to join my regiment."

"Hombre!" exclaimed Don Pedro, with a gesture of surprise, "how do you mean to go?"

"I must try and find my way," I replied, "to the Portuguese frontier, and there, doubtless, I shall get assistance."

"Carajo!" cried Don Pedro, "you are either a very bold fellow, or very ignorant of the dangers and difficulties that lie in your way."

"I care little about them," I said, "if the thing is not altogether impossible."

"Nothing is impossible," said Don Pedro, "to a bold heart and a cool head. But you will have to run the gauntlet of French army-corps and straggling parties; and how you are to do that, without being shot or made prisoner, is the thing I cannot just now understand."

"If any kind friend," I observed, "would assist me in my enterprise, I should reward him for his services."

"Vamos á ver—let us see," said Don Pedro. "The head-quarters of *el gran lor** are now at Vizeu, for your army is all in Portugal at present. General Hill is at Abrantes, Picton at Pinhel—but stay, what division do you belong to?"

"I am equally surprised and delighted," I said, "to find you so well acquainted with the positions of the British army."

"Don't you trouble yourself about that, Señor Inglesito," said Don Pedro, drily. "If I can put you in the way, I will; if not, you must take the will for the deed. What division did you say?"

"The light division," I replied.

"Oh, Crawford," interrupted Don Pedro. "He is in advance between Guarda and Ciudad Rodrigo, on the Coa. He'll have the first brush with the troops of Massena, who has orders from Napoleon to drive your leopards into the sea."

"A threat," I exclaimed, "which he will never be able to accomplish."

"That is," observed Don Pedro, gravely, "if *el gran lor* obtains the assistance of nosotros."

"Sin dubio," I responded; "nothing can be done without los valientes Españoles."

"Con qué," said Don Pedro, much gratified by this admission; "you want to go the safest way to Guarda."

"The nearest," I replied; "for I want to be with my regiment before the opening of the campaign."

Here the thoughtful Spaniard put his finger to his forehead, as if deeply considering the case in all its bearings. At length he exclaimed:

"Jesus mil veces! Lo tengo!"†

He then requested me to stand up; and, as if communing with himself, muttered:

* The great lord, as Wellington was called in Spain.

† "Jesus, a thousand times! (a common adjuration) I have it!"

"No not too tall—a light and flexible figure—good features—yes, 'twill do—buena moza! buena moza!"*

Quite at a loss to know if he was amusing himself at my expense, and extremely puzzled about the phrase "buena moza," I was about to question Don Pedro, when he suddenly started up, exclaiming:

"Venga usted conmigo!"†

More than ever surprised at what I considered very eccentric conduct, I yet followed my new friend; who, taking an iron lamp that was burning on a shelf over the fireplace, conducted me through two or three winding passages, and up a rickety flight of stairs. Then, stopping at a door, he knocked three times, and it was opened by a stout, good-looking young woman, in rather a careless *deshabille*, who drew back on seeing a stranger.

"Entre usted, caballero," said Don Pedro, with all the formal generosity of an old Castilian. "This house, and all it possesses, is yours from henceforward for ever, and I hope you will honour it with your acceptance."

This was, I confess, no great effort of generosity on the part of Don Pedro, for the venerable *casa*, as he called it, contained nothing but a rickety table, a couple of rush-bottomed chairs, a truckle bed, and an iron lamp burning before an image of the Virgin in tinsel finery, stuck up in a niche in the wall. I, however, returned *muchas gracias* for so munificent a donation, and he then introduced me to his *muy queridita muger*‡, Dona Maria.

I made a very elaborate bow, as I exclaimed, "Mi tengo á los pies de usted, señora;"§ to which she replied with a gracious smile,

"Beso á usted la mano, caballero."||

"Now," said Don Pedro to me, after these preliminary formalities, "the case is this, Señor Ingles: Mi muger is going to-morrow beyond Orense, about three days' journey from this, to see her parents, and she travels with a very careful *arriero*, who is to take up at Orense a lading of the rich wines of Valdeorras for Benevento. Now, if you are so disposed, you can travel with her to Verin, where you are quite close to the Portuguese frontier, and there we can say, 'Vaya usted con Dios.'"

"I shall be delighted," I said, "and most grateful, if the señora has no objection."

"I have none, on my own account, Señor Ingles," replied Dona Maria, with amiable frankness, "but I fear there will be some difficulty about you on the part of those gabachos of Frenchmen."

"I have foreseen and provided for that," said Don Pedro. "The English chico will have no objection to change his sex, at least in appearance, to accomplish his object."

"Not the least in the world," I exclaimed, now for the first time understanding the drift of his mysterious examination of my person; "but how on earth am I to do it?"

"Oh, leave that to us, Señor Ingles," said Don Pedro. "We

* Pretty girl! pretty girl!

† "Come with me, sir."

‡ His dear little wife.

§ "I am at your feet, señora."

|| "I kiss your hand, sir."

have been taught some strange lessons, nosotros, in a rough school ; but it will go hard if we do not yet return them with interest on our masters, whom may Santiago confound, as he did the Moors in the good old days of real Christianity."

My new friend and his buxom wife now set to work with great skill and rapidity, to effect this transformation in my outer man. Dona Maria, indeed, entered into the spirit of the thing with great glee, and produced from her wardrobe basquinas, mantillas, and other articles of lady's attire, which, with some alterations, were accommodated to my shape. She then rubbed my face with a brown ointment to hide my English complexion, put a load of false braids and curls on my head, stuck a huge comb in my hair, from which the mantilla hung gracefully over my shoulders, and placed a fan in my hand, like the sail of a windmill. When the operation was completed, she swore roundly, that I made a "buena muchacha," who would turn the heads of the English soldiers when I once got amongst them.

It was far advanced in the night before our preparations were made, and I was properly drilled into my new exercise—especially in the motions of the fan, which were of a very expressive and elaborate character. I then left my kind friends to their repose, and was conducted to the sleeping-apartment by the chico of the establishment, who was to call me at five o'clock, as we were to start before daylight.

A Spanish bed-room is, of all things in this world, the most unsophisticated part of the domestic economy, and that into which I was now ushered was by no means an exception to the rule. It was a many-angular-shaped room, with a very broken floor and no ceiling, the cross-trees of the roof being occupied by twenty or thirty cocks and hens. Half a dozen truckle beds, which the heat of the climate rendered it unnecessary to decorate with curtains, were ranged along the dirty walls ; and every bed was occupied by two guests, except mine, which I insisted, as a *sine quâ non*, on having to myself. I was not, however, equally fortunate in my demand for clean sheets, a desideratum which no entreaties could procure me from the chico ; who, with a supercilious look at my unreasonable delicacy, exclaimed,—

"Hombre, usted es muy particular !"

I was, therefore, obliged to content myself with those that were already on the bed, but taking the precaution to sleep in my clothes ; the fatigues and turmoil of the day soon lulled me to rest, which remained sound and unbroken till I was roused by Don Pedro himself to prepare for my journey.

CHAPTER XXVII.

LA MANOLA.

"AL camino ! Al camino, Señor Inglesito !" cried Don Pedro, as he entered my room the following morning between four and five, with a *candil*, or iron lamp, in his hand ; and jumping up from my flea-bitten couch, I attired myself as rapidly as I could for the road, my

worthy friend assisting me with much *savoir faire* in my unwonted toilet.

On descending the crazy staircase together, we found a long string of mules at the door, but lightly laden, having to take up the principal part of our cargo at Orense. Doña Maria was already on her pack-saddle, and I soon got into mine, which I found consisted of a great deal of wood and very little leather or stuffing; altogether different, indeed, from the light and easy jockey-saddles to which I had hitherto been accustomed.

While I was endeavouring to make myself comfortable in this new species of purgatory, which was not provided against in any of the prayers I had hitherto learned, I observed Don Pedro at a little distance, giving his final instructions to the arriero, or muleteer, as better known to the English reader. By their frequently looking at Doña Maria, and then at me, I concluded that these instructions had reference simply to our safety and comfort on the journey; but I subsequently found that they went a little further.

We at length made a start, the arriero, whose name was Diego, mounted on the foremost mule, and the rest clattering after him, through the rugged streets of Corunna; while Don Pedro in the rear, waved his hand, and exclaimed:

“Vayan ustedes con Cristo y con la Virgen!”

Thus, for an hour or two, we rode on at a steady pace, and in perfect silence, all but the bells of the leading mule, which tinkled loudly to keep the others awake; till the rising sun had dispelled the raw mists of the morning, and enabled us to throw off the voluminous capas in which we had hitherto been enveloped. Then our arriero, urging the foremost mules into a quicker pace, fell back to inquire how we were getting on.

Diego was a sturdy Gallician, with a very sanctified air, but a very keen and cunning eye. His dress consisted of a tight brown jacket, a velveteen waistcoat with hanging brass buttons, brown cloth breeches, and leathern gaiters. The broad brim of his *sombrero* was surmounted by a leaden image of the virgin, and a large bunch of rosemary, an acknowledged talisman against all the machinations of the foul fiend; while, as if to make assurance doubly sure, his conversation was interlarded with pious ejaculations, invocations of the saints, &c.

Doña Maria, though equally pious and credulous in all points of belief, was infinitely more frank in her manners, and altogether free from that hypocritical assumption of sanctity so conspicuous in honest Diego. Indeed, there was a freedom in her behaviour and expressions, when the latter was not present, which was particularly flattering to my *amour propre*: this I failed not to return in a manner that seemed highly satisfactory to my fair companion; whose sparkling black eyes, and rich complexion, heightened by exercise and the fresh morning air, wonderfully enhanced the beauty of which nature had given her a very fair share.

We stopped soon after at a *venta* by the road-side, where we had some delicious chocolate, served up with little thin slices of toast,

made of that wonderfully white and compact bread which is found in no other country than Spain. To the chocolate succeeded a small glass of cognac each; Doña Maria making no scruple to toss off hers, any more than she did at smoking her *pachillo*; a cigar wrapped up in a leaf of maize, expressly so prepared for the fair sex in Spain, both of which luxuries she seemed perfectly well accustomed to.

These creature-comforts seemed very much to thaw the ice of Diego's manner, as we jogged along in that rapid walk in which the Spanish mule surpasses the horses of other countries, over the dreary moors that extend from Corunna to Santiago, our first night's resting-place. During this period, he whiled away the time with an inexhaustible stock of songs and ballads, many of which were founded on the exploits of the modern *guerrilleros* against *los godos* and *los gabachos*, epithets of contempt liberally bestowed upon the French invaders in every part of Spain.

Doña Maria, on her part, gave ample scope to her enjoyment. She seemed like a bird, just escaped from its cage; and laughed, and sang, and chatted, with a degree of hilarity and *abandon*, which, though always checked by the presence of Diego, broke out afresh when his back was turned, with a warmth and vehemence that absolutely startled me, even experienced, as I already fancied myself, in every phase of colloquy.

Having had an excellent dinner at Leira, we resumed our journey with exhilarated spirits; and, as the evening was drawing to a close we approached the sacred precincts of Santiago de Compostella. On our way we encountered whole bevvies of barefooted pilgrims, with scrip and scallop-shell; the most penitent of them upon their knees, winning their way slowly and painfully, and singing hymns and canticles up the very gates of the Holy City.

Amidst the tolling of deep-mouthed bells, and the incessant assaults of clamorous mendicants, begging charity for the sake of the great apostle, we entered the city gates, and proceeded to the *Fonda del Espiritu Santo*, or Hotel of the Holy Ghost. There we were soon seated at a luxurious supper-table, principally occupied by pilgrims of the higher class, who could enjoy and afford to pay for those creature-comforts which their poorer fellow-pilgrims abstained from, on the plea of superlative piety.

The conversation, which naturally turned upon the extraordinary merits of the saint, and the miracles daily wrought at his tomb, having aroused in us a corresponding flame of devotion, we resolved to visit the cathedral before we retired to rest; and accordingly set out for that purpose, after the course of chocolate, which terminates every meal in Spain.

The streets were, as usual, dark, and crowded with pilgrims; some on their knees, others prostrate in the dust, and all, either singing hymns, reciting prayers, or begging alms *por el amor de Dios y de Santiago*.

We entered the building through a modern entrance, with Doric and Corinthian tiers, and a heavy pediment supported by caryatides of Moorish slaves, with Santiago above, in the habit of a pilgrim.

The interior of this rich and celebrated building was rather dark, being purposely kept so, to give greater effect to the illuminations at the high altar: and, as we sauntered about amongst kneeling pilgrims and groaning sinners, occasionally stopping at a side altar to pay our respects to some favourite saint, a fancy seized on Doña Maria to give Diego the slip, as he lay prostrate before the altar of San Antonio, the great patron of arrieros.

Accordingly, when he was striking his breast with the most edifying vehemence, and exclaiming, "*Mea culpa! mea maxima culpa!*" we rushed off into one of the lateral aisles, which were still darker than the body of the cathedral, and amused ourselves some time with the anxious but fruitless efforts of our arriero to discover us.

The aisle in which we now were, was full of confessional boxes, dedicated to different saints, and appropriated to the respective nations of the foreign pilgrims; and as the place was nearly vacant, a profane idea suddenly occurred to me. Telling Doña Maria that I would hear her confession, I got into one of the boxes, and shut myself in; while the lady, "nothing loath," entered into the spirit of the jest, and knelt, accordingly, at the place of communication.

"But, confound it all!" I exclaimed, "I can't see you. Here is a plate of metal, perforated with a number of little holes."

"Touch a button on your right-hand side," whispered Doña Maria, who seemed marvellously up to the secret.

"*In hora buena!*" I exclaimed, as I did so; and the metallic plate slid back noiselessly into the framework of the box, leaving us face to face.

"Now, then, for your confession," I said.

"In the first place," said Doña Maria, affecting to blush, "I love a handsome young hidalgo."

"O fie!" I exclaimed; "such a crime as that must be expiated by four kisses."

The penance was paid without reluctance, and the frail communicant proceeded.

"And I am already" (here she sighed heavily and in reality) "married to another that I do not love."

"That," I said, with becoming gravity, "demands a penance of eight kisses."

These were also paid, with one kiss over by mistake, to be deducted from the next allotment.

"But, worst of all," cried the fair penitent, "the young hidalgo that I love is an Englishman."

"Monstrous!" I exclaimed. "What, a heretic! One doomed to Sathanas from his birth! Twelve kisses can scarcely redeem so black a crime."

Doña Maria, convulsed with laughter, was also paying this formidable penalty, when she started suddenly, and exclaimed:

"Shut up! shut up!"

"How? how?" I demanded.

"The button on the left," she replied.

"Bless the buttons!" I exclaimed, as I touched the one indicated;

and the metallic plate slid back again into its proper groove, with becoming decency.

"Perdone usted, señora," said Diego, as he came gingerly along, with noiseless footsteps. "I did not know you were at the confessional."

"I have done now, good Diego," she meekly replied, rising and applying her handkerchief to her eyes, to conceal her laughter rather than her penitential tears.

"But where is the Inglesito?" demanded Diego.

"He is at the confessional of his country," replied Doña Maria, with admirable presence of mind; "and he will soon follow us to the great altar."

They accordingly moved off, and I stepped from the confessional and followed them.

This little incident, as the reader may imagine, broke the ice between Doña Maria and myself; and many little scenes of by-play occurred between us in the progress of our journey. But Diego's suspicions seemed to have been awakened; and he kept so close a watch on our proceedings as to prevent anything beyond the most innocent interchange of signs and tokens of mutual affection.

A day or two after, I learned in familiar chat with Diego, for he was a thorough-paced gossip, that Doña Maria was originally a *manola* of Madrid, whose beauty had induced Don Pedro to marry her, in spite of her unhappy position.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE FRENCH CONVOY.

ON our arrival at Orense, a nice, clean-looking town, pleasantly situated on a gentle slope above the Minho, Diego took in his full cargo for Benevente, as he said with a mysterious smile, of the renowned Tostado wine, for which that place is celebrated. It is also famous for the hams of Caldelas, a couple of which excellent joints he laid in for our private enjoyment on the road; and, thus furnished, we resumed our journey.

We were now approaching the Portuguese frontier, and had already crossed two or three small tributaries of the Duero, rushing down their rocky beds amidst the deep defiles of the Sierra de Gorez; whose rugged sides were partially covered with dense and gloomy patches of olives and cork-trees, while the topmost heights were crowned with the fir, and the hardy ilex.

The country was picturesque and beautiful, and I enjoyed the constant alternation of steep rocky precipice and verdant dell. The silence of the scene was only broken by the brawling rivulet, as it foamed along over its rocky bed; and the tinkling of numerous bells, as our long string of mules, laden with the rich Tostado wine in pig-skins, stalked rapidly on, looking like a team of stags or elks, with

their long taper legs, their lofty stature, and the bold carriage of their heads. These sagacious animals were trained to stop all at the same instant by one long shrill whistle; and it was seldom that honest Diego had occasion to use anything in the way of reproof to them; even then it was conveyed in terms of regard, and almost paternal affection, as, "*Arra, mula!* (Get on, mule!) *Vamos, capitano!* (Go along, captain!) *Vamonos, mis hijos!* (Come on, my sons!)" &c.

We had as yet seen nothing in the shape of an enemy; for, whenever the French troops marched from one province to another, the partisans of the Junta immediately commenced organizing the country in the name of Ferdinand the Seventh, as if the French had abandoned it for ever; and the troops of Napoleon, though invincible in the field, were in fact only masters of the ground on which they stood. The garrisons left to overawe the country on the military roads, were obliged, for their own personal security, to repair and shut themselves up in the old ruined castles on the heights, which had been erected ages before by the Romans or the Moors for a similar purpose. Even here, they durst not station their sentinels beyond the bounds of the enclosures, for fear of assassination; but placed them in some turret, or on a scaffolding of planks upon the roof, under cover of the chimney, in order to observe all that passed in their vicinity.

During our journey through this mountainous region, we were occasionally challenged by these captive sentinels, when our road lay under the eminence on which their time-shattered citadels were perched; but other enemy we saw none. Even by these, as we had all the appearance of inoffensive travellers, we were allowed to pass without question or demur; though Diego generally amused himself with making contemptuous gestures at them, when a jutting rock, or the winding of the road, had placed him out of musket-range.

We were at length within a few miles of Verin, where I was to bid adieu to my friendly escort, and find my way, the best I could, to the outposts of the British army; a circumstance which, I ought to be ashamed to confess, gave me much less regret than to my warm-hearted companion, whose affection evidently increased every moment, and at times betrayed itself somewhat unguardedly, in spite of the jealous surveillance of Diego.

At this period, the latter respectable personage received several mysterious communications from nimble-footed mountaineers, armed with the trabuco, and the long knife in the girdle, who seemed to descend upon us unexpectedly from steep and rugged pathways, impracticable to everything but the goat, or the equally sure-footed peasant of these Alpine wilds. On all these occasions, looks of intelligence would pass between our arriero and Doña Maria; or a few significant words, which I could not always catch, seemed to indicate some anticipated event, that called for a few necessary preparations on her part.

Accordingly, when we stopped one day at noon to take our usual refreshment, by the side of a purling rill, in a deep glen, where there

was neither posada nor venta, Doña Maria seemed to take more than ordinary pains to improve her personal appearance, by the addition of sundry ornaments, and a most minute attention to all the mysteries of the toilet. Nay, to my great surprise, she lavished similar attentions upon me, till, having re-arranged my dress, and devoted some time to my braids and curls, she seemed so well satisfied with the success of her operations, that she threw her arms round my neck, and favoured me with a shower of kisses. These I was about to return with interest, when Diego, as usual, made his unexpected appearance from behind a rock, where he had evidently been lying *perdu*, in expectation of some such catastrophe.

Unable to account for these preparations in any other manner than by supposing that Doña Maria expected to meet some friends or relations during our day's journey, I assisted her to mount; then springing on the back of my own mule, with very unfeminine agility, we resumed our usual steady pace; Diego having first made the echoes ring with one of those wild halloos so peculiar to the Spanish peasant, and which was immediately after either echoed or answered at some distance amongst the hills.

In this manner we had proceeded about an hour and a half, when I was suddenly shocked by a very unexpected object, which seemed, however, to excite no surprise in my companions. This was a French soldier lying dead upon the road, in a pool of blood, his throat cut from ear to ear, and his features mangled in a ghastly and barbarous manner. Though my nerves are not easily shaken, I confess this sight gave me considerable uneasiness, being the first specimen of Spanish warfare I had yet witnessed; but my fair companion, on the contrary, smiled, and exclaimed, with a gesture of contempt, as she passed the body,—

“Gabacho Frances, maldito sea!”

This little incident gave me no exalted idea of my companion's humanity; and it was not improved when, two or three hundred yards further on, we observed some Spanish peasants who had bound another French soldier, and were dragging him into an olive-grove that bordered the roadside, evidently with the intention of murdering him. The poor fellow begged hard for mercy, and made frequent appeals to the señoras who were approaching, as he hoped, to his relief; but in vain, for Doña Maria called out to her countrymen, “Matale! matale!” and any interference on my part might have occasioned the loss of my own life without saving his.

These sad events evidently indicated, as I thought, the proximity of some French troops, and I said as much to my companions, recommending them, at the same time, to use additional caution, lest we should fall into the hands of the enemy; but I was answered only by a mysterious smile, which passed between Diego and Doña Maria. Indeed, the former, so far from apprehending such a result, hurried his mules into a swinging sort of pace, every now and then giving a wild halloo, that resounded fearfully amongst the recesses of the *sierra*.

We had not proceeded more than a mile in this manner, when we

fell in with a French rear-guard of ten or twelve men; the non-commissioned officer who commanded it immediately ordering us to halt, and give an account of ourselves.

"Señores," said Diego, nothing abashed, "I am going to Benevente with a cargo of Tostado wine."

"And excellent tippie it is," said the sergeant, "of which we are sadly in want. Therefore, move on, and report your arrival to the commandant."

"And be sure you include the ladies in your report," said the corporal: "for our noble captain loves a pretty girl as well as a sparkling glass."

"Mañana! Mañana!" replied Diego, as he pushed forward towards the main body, under an escort from the rear-guard, who had orders to shoot him instantly if he ventured to deviate from the road, or make any resistance.

All this appeared to me so singular, and my companions seemed so little affected by the perilous position in which we were placed, that I could not help thinking there was some premeditation in the whole affair. I had no time, however, for any explanation with them on the subject, for we soon got up with the main body; this consisted of sixty men, under a captain and subaltern, escorting a convoy of mules and waggons, laden with a miscellaneous collection of articles, the *disjecta membra* of a hurried march out of snug quarters in Galicia. It was, in short, the heavy baggage and plunder of a division of French troops, then some twenty miles in advance, on their way to join the army of Massena; and it comprised, amongst other valuable property, several fine paintings by Velasquez and Murillo, which the general commanding the division had taken, as *opima spolia*, from the shrine of Santiago, together with numerous silver candlesticks, gold ornaments, valuable jewels, rich sacerdotal robes, &c., &c.

The arrival of Diego and his cargo of Tostado wine being notified to the commandant, he condemned it *instantaner*, as good and lawful capture, and ordered our arriero to join the *cortége* accordingly. Both the commandant and his subaltern eyed Doña Maria and myself with looks of eager curiosity and evident interest; and the former, having inquired who we were, Diego coolly replied that it was his wife and sister, going to a neighbouring convent, where his sister was to take the veil.

We soon after approached the village of Abavides, which lay in the bottom of a narrow valley, through whose centre a mountain torrent urged its foaming course. On the other side of the village rose a precipitous ridge, with a winding pathway to the summit; up this we perceived, slowly wending their way, the inhabitants of the village, led by the alcade and the priest, who were easily distinguished by their black cloaks, and the canoe-shaped hat of the latter. The children, and most valuable effects of the villagers, were borne by strings of mules and asses, followed by the women; while the male peasants, armed with carbines and *escopetas*, or long-barrelled muskets, brought up the rear.

We accordingly found the village totally deserted on our approach,

and nothing could exceed the ominous silence that reigned around. This, however, did not affect the spirits of the Frenchmen, who jested merrily at the panic of the poor fugitives, and congratulated each other on the easy conquest they were about to accomplish. Having taken possession, in the name of Napoleon the Great, head-quarters were established in the principal mansion of the place, and the two señoras invited to take up their residence there also; the said invitation being, to all intents and purposes, a most peremptory order.

The singular position in which I thus found myself, appeared to me like a dream, and a very unpleasant one too; for I could no otherwise look on my approaching interview with our hospitable entertainers, than as a certain prelude to a French prison, if not to a summary fusillade as a spy, should my sex and country be discovered. I determined, therefore, to affect a silent, modest, and reserved line of conduct, while at table—for we were invited to dinner—and to retire as soon as possible after, under pretence of fatigue.

The mules and baggage-waggons were drawn up in front of the commandant's quarters, and a guard of twenty men told off for their protection; the remainder of the troops were then dismissed, and ordered to billet themselves for the night, *à discrétion*, or according to their own fancy, in the empty houses. I had thus an opportunity of seeing, for the first time, the expertness with which French soldiers accomodate themselves to circumstances. They broke in all directions, into squads and parties of three and four; who ran in and out of the houses like so many ants, in search of plunder, provisions, and cooking utensils: while, if any doors happened to have been locked by their too careful owners, a musket-shot fired into the key-hole speedily disembarassed them of the obstacle.

By this laudable system, before many minutes had elapsed, our escort seemed to be abundantly furnished with "all appliances and means to boot;" and soon settled down in numerous parties, to prepare their evening meal. But what surprised and displeased me not a little, as I stood at a window of the commandant's drawing-room, which overlooked the moving scene, was to behold that knave Diego, that pious Catholic, and profound hater of the French, actively assisting these bitter enemies of his country to make themselves comfortable at the expense of his unhappy compatriots: nay, actually stealing, every now and then, for their accommodation, and from under the very eyes of the sentinels, a skin-full of that precious Tostado wine with which his mules were laden. In short, to such a pitch did his *bonhomie* extend, that he supplied the very sentinels themselves with horn after horn of the precious liquid; which they gulped down with many a "*Merci!*" "*Bon enfant!*" and "*Cher Espagnol!*" for his unaccountable hospitality.

Diego, finally, by his unpatriotic assiduity, became an especial favourite with the whole party, who wrung him by the hand with loud expressions of gratitude, and even consulted him in the arrangement of their respective bivouacs. Unable any longer to conceal my

disgust at so flagrant a betrayal of the honour and interest of his country, I turned away from the window, and was met plump by the commandant, who, with the well-known gallantry of his nation, offered me his arm to conduct me to the dinner-table.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE GUERRILLEROS.

OUR company consisted of the commandant and his subaltern, Doña Maria, and myself; as snug a *parti carré* as may be met with at any *restaurant à trente sous* in the Champs Elysées, or the Palais Royal. Lieutenant Derville, a good-looking young fellow, seemed, as if by a preconcerted arrangement, to devote himself exclusively to Doña Maria; while the commandant, an ugly, wizen-faced *vieux moustache*, was my beau for the nonce.

Our dinner was very good, considering the hasty nature of the *cuisine*; and I paid it all due honour, for the mountain air had sharpened my appetite. Indeed, our two military friends, as they helped me alternately, plate after plate, must have thought that such an appetite as mine was anything but fit for the spare diet of a convent. I had, however, sufficient command over myself not to drink in proportion; though I anxiously longed to have a good manly swig of the delicious wine which the knave Diego was at that moment serving out to the soldiers.

But this abstemiousness of mine did not prevent my companions from paying due honour to the bottle. Doña Maria herself set the example; every moment challenging our two beaux to hob-nob, in full tumblers of the pure liquid, and taunting them as milksops if they did not do her justice. This she carried to such a degree, that I wondered not only at her want of delicacy, but at her strength of head; which enabled her to stand potations that were evidently making a serious inroad on the brains of the Frenchmen, who had not been long accustomed to the strong wines of the Peninsula.

When the dinner-things were removed, and fresh wine placed upon the table, with the delicious fruit of the country, our two beaux were evidently fuddled. Their conversation became excited, and their pronunciation thick and unintelligible, speaking Spanish, as they both did, badly. Derville hung over his Dulcinea, whispering soft nonsense: to which she, "nothing loth," her ear did seriously incline; not even sparing those little female arts by which the lord of the creation is so often won to his own undoing. Captain Dubardieu, on the contrary, called for his guitar, and sang me a doleful dump from a French opera of the old school, before Auber had infused an Italian soul into the maudlin mass.

When this had continued for some half-hour, amidst the giggling of the other pair of lovers at the little effect it seemed to produce,

Dubardieu at length arose, made a most elaborate bow, requested me to honour him with a waltz, caught me round the waist with one arm, and thrust his unoccupied hand into my bosom.

Enraged beyond all prudence, and without taking time for reflection, I gave my *inamorato* such a box on the side of the head, as sent him staggering a dozen paces backwards; till at length he fell over a pine log into the capacious fire-place, amidst a roar of laughter from Derville and his *chère amie*: the former, mystified as he was, looking upon it as nothing more than a piece of prudery on the part of the nun elect.

“C’est un jeune homme!” cried the commandant, picking himself up, and spluttering out a mouthful of ashes, “C’est un vilain garçon! Ah, coquin! je te paierai pour ça.”

He drew his sword accordingly, and made at me with intense fury and tolerable agility; while Derville was so stupified with love and wine, that he looked upon the whole as a jest, and laughed immoderately at the fun.

Not so, however, the commandant, whom I seemed to have effectually sobered; and who, now perfectly master of himself, rushed at me with the most sanguinary intentions. In this predicament, I looked round for something to defend myself; and luckily spying an old broom in a corner, I seized it just in time to parry a thrust that would otherwise have brought my adventures to a permanent close. Foiled in this attempt, Dubardieu renewed his attack with all the skill of which he was master, delivering *carte* and *tierce* with a perfection of science that was ingloriously wasted upon an old broomstick; with which I not only managed to defend myself, but gave my adversary several sound whacks upon the ribs that made him grunt and grin like a baboon.

At length, the noise we made in our courses round the room, and the unextinguishable laughter of Derville, in which he was heartily joined by Doña Maria, when she saw that I was more than a match for the old captain, attracted the baggage-guard to the scene of action. Bursting open the door, they all rushed in, drunk and sober as they were, at the critical moment when I had their breathless commandant pinned up in a corner; and throwing themselves upon me in a body, they speedily bore me to the ground.

“A spy! a spy!” screamed the commandant, with scarcely breath enough to utter the suggestions of his fury. “A villanous spy! a sacré guerilla!”

“Nay, nay, mon capitaine,” said a shrewd non-commissioned officer. “he is at all events no Spaniard. Where will you find a complexion like this in all Galicia?”

Unluckily a scratch of my adversary’s point, in one of his savage assaults, had drawn some blood on my cheek, and this being rubbed had removed the brown ointment with which Doña Maria had concealed my northern complexion. A towel and water were now produced; my face was washed, my country discovered as well as my sex; while, to put the matter beyond all doubt, my person being searched, my pistols and my commission were brought to light.

"'Tis an English dog, *un sacré Jean Rosbif!*" cried the captain; "a thousand times worse than a guerilla. I'll hang him instantly, before he does more mischief."

The propriety of this decision was lauded by all. Even Derville, who had come to his senses, acknowledged that it was not only justifiable by the laws of war, but actually necessary for the safety of the convoy; this being evidently threatened with some serious disaster, of which I was doubtless the instrument. Finding myself thus on the point of destruction, for I was ordered to be hanged instantly on a tree before the door, I kicked and struggled with might and main to release myself; but my arms were tied behind my back, and a huge grenadier seized me by the shoulders to drag me out to execution.

At this moment Doña Maria, who had hitherto been a passive spectator of what was going on, uttered a fearful shriek; then stooping down she drew a knife from her garter, the well-known scabbard of the *Manolas*, and rushing at the grenadier, she plunged it into his abdomen with so deadly an aim and purpose, that he fell dead before his astonished comrades.

With the fury of a tigress deprived of its young, Doña Maria next attacked the others, and inflicted some desperate wounds; accompanying every plunge of her knife with a shriek that rang through the silent village, and was echoed amongst the caverns and hills by which it was surrounded.

She was at length overpowered, her weapon wrenched from her grasp, and the soldiers were about to inflict a summary vengeance on her, when a yell, like the united voices of a thousand fiends, rose on the air, multiplied by the mountain echoes; and this was succeeded by several volleys of small arms, and ferocious cries of—

"Abajo malditos gabachos! Boca á tierra ladrones del demonio!"

"The guerrilleros! the guerrilleros!" cried every voice, as all rushed out pell-mell to make head against the onslaught; while Doña Maria, throwing herself into my arms, exclaimed, as she fainted,—

"Sal de mí alma!—you are saved, and I care not for the rest!"

Grateful, truly grateful as I was for the timely succour of Doña Maria, I could not avoid shuddering when I reflected that I had so determined a murderess in my arms, and felt that her affection for me was the cause of her ferocity. The singular contrast between her recent frenzy, and the excessive and amiable gentleness she had always hitherto evinced, in my presence at least, also increased my wonder; and opened to my inexperienced mind another fearful chapter in the anatomy of the human heart.

Meanwhile I exerted myself to bring her to her senses: laying her gently down upon a sofa, I bathed her temples with water, till at length she opened her eyes, and gazed around her with a bewildered look. But the volleys of musketry, and the shouts of the combatants outside, having speedily brought her to her recollection, she fixed her eyes upon mine, and throwing her arms round my neck, wept and sobbed in my bosom.

When the first gush of passion had subsided, I tried to comfort

poor Maria, and thanked her earnestly for her timely intervention in my favour.

"Ah! 'tis but little," she said, "compared with what I could do for you. Willingly would I forfeit my own life to preserve yours, my *querido*—"

I was about to renew my acknowledgments, but she stopped me.

"Don't interrupt me," she said, "for our time is short, and we must now part—yes, part for ever! Pobre Maria!" she exclaimed, while large tears rolled down her cheeks, and her breast heaved with heavy sighs. "Pobre Manola! One little glimpse of happiness you have had; but all is over, and a life of endless misery is now your lot. But you, my *queridito*, a life of honour awaits you, and may it be a life of happiness! Yet, when other ties shall bind you to another home and country, perhaps you will not forget the poor Manola to whom you have been like a messenger of love and peace from heaven!"

I pressed poor Maria in my arms, and kissing the tears from her eyes, assured her that I should always think of her with gratitude and affection. I then tore myself from her embrace, and it was well I did so; for in another moment a body of guerrilleros rushed into the room, headed by my quondam friend Pero Votero, or Don Pedro, armed to the teeth with pistols, dagger, and carbine; his high crowned hat being decorated with a broad ribbon, bearing the following inscription,—

"VINCER O MORIR PRO PATRIA, ET PRO FERDINANDO SEPTIMO!"*

The whole plot was now unravelled. Don Pedro was the chief of the Guerrilla, with some of whose members I had supped at Corunna. Doña Maria and I were the decoy ducks destined to lull the suspicions of the two officers; while honest Diego, with his cargo of wine for Benevente, was to fuddle the soldiers, and betray them to his companions; an office which he performed so effectually that they were unable to defend themselves, and were shot down without mercy. Upwards of fifty were killed and wounded in this murderous affair; and the few who survived the slaughter were made prisoners, to afford a more lingering revenge to the conquerors: such was the cruel and remorseless nature of this patriotic war, so justly styled *Guerra al cuchillo*.†

Don Pedro's first attentions were of course devoted to his wife, who received his caresses, however, with a degree of coldness and constraint which he luckily ascribed to her terrible fright. Then turning to me he said,—

"Señor Ingles, the joke was carried further than I anticipated with respect to you, but all is now happily over. Since, however, I have put your life in peril, it shall be my business to procure you a safe journey to your regiment, and the sooner the better; for that *maldito capitano* has escaped, though I had made a vow to Santiago to pay him off for his cruel tyranny, when he had the whip-hand of us in Corunna. He will bring down his brother gabachos upon us immediately; but they

* "Conquer or die for our native land, and for Ferdinand VII."

† "War to the knife."

shall find nobody here, nor any of the sacred things they have plundered from the shrine of Santiago, whose name be for ever praised and blessed—amen !”

“Amen,” devoutly responded the guerrilleros, as they made the sign of the cross upon their foreheads with their bloody fingers.

“Diego !” shouted Don Pedro.

“Here am I,” said Diego, coming with his sanctified look from amongst the crowd.

“Hijo Diego,” resumed Don Pedro, “you have well acquitted yourself of your duty this day, and shall be duly reported to the Junta. I am now about to confer upon you another proof of my confidence : say, are you ready and willing to conduct this English officer to the outposts of El Gran Lor at la Guardia ?”

“With all my heart,” replied Diego. “Es bueno chico y muy Cristiano,” he added, with a sly leer at me, “especially in the confession-box.”

“Then saddle two fresh mules immediately,” said Don Pedro, “and start at once. You know the road I dare say.”

“I should think I do,” said Diego, with a broad grin.

“And now, muchachos,” said Don Pedro, “tackle the mules to the waggons, and start instantly for Orense. Let the dead and dying gabachos take care of one another, but put our brave fellows that are hurt into the waggons. Vamonos, muchachos ! come along, my dear wife.”

Doña Maria however had vanished ; and as I had nothing further to detain me, I went out to prepare for my journey.

The sight I now witnessed was appalling : the ground was strewn with dead and dying Frenchmen ; while savage-looking guerrilleros, with bloody knives in their hands, were stabbing those who still showed any signs of life, and rifling their knapsacks. These, it must be confessed, contained numerous articles of plunder, as doubloons, dollars, gold and silver watches and trinkets, silver cups, spoons, forks, &c. Other Spaniards were putting the mules in the traces, and moving the waggons off as speedily as possible ; while a third party were collecting and carrying away the arms, accoutrements, and ammunition, even to the very clothing of their slaughtered adversaries.

There now only remained Don Pedro and a few trusty followers, who, being well mounted, were to act as a rear-guard ; when, unluckily as they were about to start, the poor French commandant was discovered up to his neck in a wine-vat. The sight of Dubardieu aroused all the vengeance of Don Pedro, who ordered him for immediate execution ; but the Frenchman prayed humbly for his life, and I also earnestly interceded for him.

“Carajo !” cried the Spaniard, with a grim smile. “You English are so inconsistent. Why this is the very fellow that twice this day attempted to take your life.”

“I forgive him heartily,” I said ; “and pray you, for my sake, to spare his wretched life.”

“Well,” said Don Pedro, “for your sake, I will spare his life ; but I cannot take him with me, and I mustn’t allow him to escape till

we're out of the reach of pursuit. Therefore, muchachos, tie him up to yonder tree; and if the wolves should pay him a visit in the course of the night, it will not be my fault."

This was a danger I had not anticipated, but I now felt its reality; for already troops of these shaggy monsters, who abound in the gorges of the Sierra, were seen prowling about, and snuffing the tainted air from the scene of action, where they speedily hoped to glut their horrid appetites.

Poor Dubardieu also felt the frightful extremity to which he was reduced; and begged piteously to be taken off as a prisoner, thrown into a dungeon, or even put to death at once, to avoid his anticipated torments. Don Pedro, however, turned an equally deaf ear to his prayers and to my remonstrances; the only modification of his stern decree being, if anything, a refinement on its cruelty.

"Tie him up well," said Don Pedro to his myrmidons, "but leave his right arm free, and give him his sword to defend himself; wolf against wolf! That's fair play, or the devil's in it."

This was accordingly done: the unfortunate Frenchman was tied up to the trunk of an olive tree, and armed with his sword; while Diego taking me by the arm, exclaimed,—

"Vamos, Señor Inglesito; you'll do no good for him, or yourself, if you stay any longer. Pero Votero is not a man to be trifled with."

Feeling the utter hopelessness of any further interference on my part, I bade adieu to Don Pedro, sprang on my mule, and set off with my trusty guide. As I turned the corner of the building, I looked up at the window, and there stood pobre Maria, gazing after me with streaming eyes. I kissed my hand to her, pressed it to my heart, and the next moment lost sight of her for ever.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE SMUGGLER'S VENTA.

It was getting dusk as we cleared the village; and the clattering of the mules' feet upon the rugged road, was the only thing that broke the dead silence which now hung over a scene where the noise of battle, the shouts of the victors, and the groans of the wounded had so recently formed a dismal chorus.

Two or three frightful yells, however, came upon the breeze, which I could not help fancying were the last efforts of poor Dubardieu against the wolves, equally savage and remorseless as Don Pedro; and I shuddered when I reflected on his horrid fate. But these soon after ceased, as well as the clattering of the mules' feet, when we quitted the main road. Making a sudden turn to the right, we struck into a wild and heathy district; following the course of the rivulet, which was every moment increased in volume by the tributary rills that flowed into it from the mountains on either side.

The day had been warm for the early season; but the night came on chill and cold: while a damp mist arose from the bed of the river, that made my teeth chatter, and my whole frame shiver, as though I were getting a relapse of the Walcheren ague. These symptoms were soon perceived by my attentive guide; who, slackening his pace, which had hitherto been at full speed, unbuckled a capacious cloak with a hood to it, which had been strapped before him, and handed it to me with a gracious air, as a present from Doña Maria. Pobre Maria! in the midst of her own troubles, she had not forgotten mine.

Diego then wrapped himself up in another *capa* that was buckled behind him, and I lost no time in following his example, which made a wonderful difference to me in point of comfort: my inward man was still further solaced by a long swig at a *bota* of Diego's excellent wine, which hung at my saddle-bow; on which occasion, as the reader will naturally conceive, I made ample amends for my self-denial at the dinner-table.

These preliminaries being completed, we prepared for a fresh start, when I felt quite equal to all the fatigues and perils of the night; more especially, as I had been furnished with a carbine and a waist-belt of cartridges, and Don Pedro had restored my pistols and commission to me when I bade him adieu. We again set off at full speed, to take advantage of the level country as long as it lasted; and kept up nearly the same pace for three hours, without meeting with any obstruction. But all semblance of a road had long ceased; and the ground was becoming marshy and broken into swamps, through which, however, our mules splashed, as sure-footed as if they were going over a bowling-green.

The silence of the night was unbroken, except by the noise we made, and the howling of the wolves, which reminded me sadly of poor Dubardieu. From the occasional snorting and starting of my mule, I felt assured that we ourselves were surrounded by these voracious animals; and I thought I could even distinguish the sparkling of their eyes, every now and then, through the palpable obscure.

Unwilling to become a prey to these savage monsters, who, by a sudden spring from an overhanging rock, might effectually prevent me from ever seeing the Light Division, I was determined to try the effect of a shot or two amongst them. Being some distance in front of Diego, I unslung my carbine; and, checking the speed of my mule, I went on slowly till I thought I could discern one of the catiffs crossing my path, at a distance of forty or fifty paces. I then fired with a steady aim; and was assured of my success by the dreadful howl that immediately followed, which was repeated on all sides, in every diabolical key that can be imagined.

Effectually roused by these savage yells, our mules pricked up their ears, and dashed forward at a rate that soon removed us from the dangerous proximity. But this was only to bring us into new and unexpected peril: for, as we slowly proceeded up a rocky eminence, towards a dark-looking object, that bore some resemblance to a house, a report of fire-arms suddenly assailed our ears; while a shower of slugs or bullets whistled past, too close to be pleasant,

cutting the branches of the trees on either side of the path we were pursuing.

This threatening demonstration, sufficiently startling of itself, was immediately followed by a ferocious voice, demanding with a savage sort of growl, and amidst a volley of oaths and imprecations,—

“Quien vive?”

“España, España!” replied Diego. “Cuerpo del demonio! I thought every one would have known me hereabouts, even in the dark.”

We had by this time come up close to the door of a low, strong-looking building; and the *mirilla*, or little square peep-hole, with which all Spanish doors are furnished, being opened, we were reconnoitred from within for a moment, till at length a female voice exclaimed,—

“Madre de Dios! ’Tis Diego!”

The door was immediately opened, and we were admitted without further ceremony; Diego exclaiming, in his usual sanctified manner, as he crossed the threshold,—

“Ave Maria purisima!”

And being immediately answered by all present, and with equal piety,—

“Sin peccado concebida!”

The first persons we encountered on entering were three determined-looking fellows, with *trabucos*, or musketoons, in their hands; one of which had evidently been just discharged, either to kill or to frighten us. Their hostility, however, extended no further, for they gave Diego a friendly greeting as a *compañero*; while a buxom wench caught him round the neck and kissed him very lovingly.

Diego, who with all his sanctimonious formality was not insensible to this token of affection, bestowed upon the young lady the endearing epithets of *querida*, and *amiga*, and *cara Juanita*: he also threw over her neck a gold chain with a sparkling cross attached to it, evidently one of the first-fruits of the late conflict. To her mother, the *patrona* of the venta, who gave him the *benvenido* with much cordiality, he also gave a dozen massy silver spoons, which had lately occupied a corner in a Frenchman’s knapsack.

“Vamos, vamos!” exclaimed one of the strangers; “let the presents go round, amigo.”

“Mañana, mañana!” said Diego, with a wave of his hand, to indicate that there were no more.

“What hidalgo have you been rifling?” asked another.

“You’ll know all about it,” replied Diego, “when you get on as far as Abavides.”

“But why all this mystery?” demanded the third. “Tell us at once.”

“Let me finish my chocolate first,” said Diego, as he took a creamy cup just prepared for him by Juanita.

The apartment in which we now stood was, as usual, the kitchen, dining-room, and drawing-room of this way-side hotel. The walls were black with smoke, and unadorned, except by a coarse black

crucifix, which hung on the right-hand of the door, with a broken basin under it for holy water. A large cork-tree was blazing on the hearth, over which two or three iron pots were suspended, bubbling, hissing, and sending forth a savoury odour; while a few pieces of lighted pine, stuck in the sides of the chimney, illuminated the apartment, as the hostess was preparing the supper-table.

"Carajo!" cried Diego, when he had finished his chocolate; "these are pretty manners you have learned here lately, mis amigos, to salute poor weary travellers with a shower of leaden bullets from your trabucos."

"'Twas your own fault, Diego," replied one of the men; "we took you for malditos aduaneros."

"I thought you knew better," said another, "than to go firing your escopeta through the mountains at this time of the night."

"I did no such thing," said Diego; "though the wolves did come about us pretty thick."

"Who was it, then?" demanded every one in a tone of alarm. "Are the aduaneros then really on the look-out?"

"Well, if I must tell you the truth," said Diego, with a smile, "it was this young gen—ahem, young lady, I mean."

"Young lady!" cried the men, with a laugh.

"Young lady!" sighed Juanita.

"Young lady!" screamed the *patrona*.

Here I threw off my cloak and hood, which had hitherto concealed my feminine attire; and shone forth in all the glories of frills, flounces, and furbelows, the borrowed finery of poor Doña Maria.

"Conque, Señor Diego," said one of the smugglers, with a hearty laugh; "this is way you go roaming about the country with young ladies by night, while poor Juanita sits at home in the chimney corner."

"If she takes my advice," said another, throwing his arm around her waist, "she'll pay him off in his own coin."

"Cuidado!" cried Juanita, giving him a pretty smart box on the ear. "I know how and when to avenge myself, without your teaching."

"Fair maid!" I said, "amiable Juanita, do not let me be the cause of any unhappiness between you and your *novio*. Believe me, I would rather win your love than excite your jealousy."

"Poco á poco—fair and softly, good sir," cried Diego, interposing, "you have done mischief enough that way already, Señor Inglesito."

Here was another cause of wonder to the inmates of the venta, who now looked at me with increasing curiosity; till, at length, to prevent further mistakes, Diego explained the mystery of my metamorphosis, and the object of my journey. He also gave them an account of the cutting-up of the French convoy, and of my adventure with the commandant, which threw them into convulsions of laughter, and excited many a jest at my expense, some of which covered Juanita's face with frowns and blushes.

To put an end to this badinage, which was rather exceeding the bounds of good manners, the *patrona* summoned us to supper; and

we all sat down, with immense appetites, to an enormous brown earthen dish, containing a *guisado*, or stew, of hares and rabbits, that smoked in the centre of the table, and diffused around a delicious fragrance. It was flanked, on one side, by a splendid ham, for which Galicia is famous, and on the other, by a dish of hog's puddings and *garavances*, or stewed beans; while the round flattened decanter, peculiar to Spain, with a long neck, and still longer spout, circled round the board, pouring down the throat of every guest in turn a jet of generous wine.

All hearts being opened by the genial influence of these creature comforts, my new companions, who, as I before surmised, were all smugglers, renewed their mirth and triumph at the late glorious event, expressing themselves very sententiously as to the ultimate results of the war.

"Patience, and shuffle the cards!" they said; "the pitcher goes to the well till it breaks! He must be blind, indeed, that can't see through the bottom of a sieve!" with other scraps of proverbial wisdom, for which the countrymen of Sancho Panza are so famous. Then they abused Napoleon and *los gabachos Franceses* for the invasion of their *delicioso pais*. Honey, they said, was not made for the mouth of an ass! and Napoleon, in particular, ought to be sent to *los cuatro infiernos* for his presumption. They were all ready, they said, for a *guerra al cuchillo*, if the English would only stick by them. As for those poor Portuguese, they were only to be despised; for it was well known that God first made the Gallician, and afterwards the Portuguese to wait upon him. But, "Viva el gran Lor! and Vivan los valorosos Ingleses!"

"Paz con Inglaterra,
Con todo el mundo guerra!"

Amidst all this egotism and self-glorification, I was glad to learn that our new friends had been to the English camp with a cargo of brandy, tobacco, cigars, and other contraband wares; which they were enabled to sell to our troops at a much cheaper rate than they could be supplied from Lisbon. They knew the Light Division perfectly well, and told me that they were stationed at Gallegos and Barba del Puerco, on the banks of the Agueda; the French being about to lay siege to Ciudad Rodrigo, which was only three or four miles from our advanced posts.

Having received such circumstantial information, which subsequently proved quite correct, as to the position of my regiment, I determined to strike across the country and join it at once, instead of going to Lord Wellington's head-quarters at La Guarda. On consulting Diego, I found that he was perfectly competent to guide me thither; and as it was desirable, on many accounts, that we should cross the Portuguese frontier before daylight, he soon after rose from the supper-table, exclaiming,—

"Arriba, arriba, señores! Ya, vamos!"*

Having paid liberally for our supper, we now prepared to start:

* "Up, up, masters, we are off!"

the smugglers shook hands with me, exclaiming, "Con Cristo vais, amigo!" and Juanita, in return for the *pezzo duro* that I slipped into her hand, gave me a gentle pressure, as she exclaimed with a coquetish sigh, "Vaya usted con la Virgen, caballero!"

We continued riding for the remainder of the night at a slackened pace; for we were now ascending and descending steep and rugged hills, and crossing the rocky beds of foaming torrents, where it was sometimes with difficulty that our mules could keep their legs. This was, in fact, the mountainous frontier, over which Soult's army escaped from Portugal with difficulty, by the sacrifice of its artillery and baggage, only a few months before, when pursued by Sir Arthur Wellesley's victorious troops, which never ceased pressing upon and galling the rear of the French, until they were fairly over the frontier. In these stupendous passes, they were also incessantly assailed by clouds of armed mountaineers, who, without venturing to engage in close array, or corps against corps, always retired from rock to rock, and from one position to another among the heights, firing perpetually, even when flying from the hated *gabachos*; while the wounded, the sick, or the exhausted French soldier, who lagged for a moment behind his column, invariably fell a prey to the vengeance of his inveterate enemies.

Morning broke sweetly upon this mountain barrier between two nations so closely connected, yet so dissimilar in many respects; the first indication we received of having crossed the frontier, being the palpable difference between the sonorous Castilian and the squeaking language of Lusitania, addressed to us by the peasants of this wild district. The scenery was striking and picturesque: the road sometimes passing beneath a succession of lofty peaks on one side; while on the other lay a deep and narrow gulph, from which arose the faint murmur of the torrent, that wound its tortuous course at the bottom. The lower sides of the mountain were covered luxuriantly with forests of beech, olives, and cork-trees; while, in the higher regions, the evergreen oak stretched its venerable boughs across some dark ravine, and the gloomy pine crowned the very summits, twisted and riven by the violence of the wintry gales.

We had very little trace of a road; holding our way along tracts of uncultivated and uncultivable land, covered with a thick underwood of gum-cistus, and other aromatic and medicinal plants; which, under the pressure of our mules' feet, loaded the air with a rich perfume. As the morning advanced, the cold blue tint of the mountains gradually warmed up to lilac, then to pink, and pale yellow; till at last the lofty pinnacles were deeply tinged with crimson, orange, and gold, as the glorious luminary rose above the horizon.

There were very few symptoms of life in these vast solitudes; the bell of a hermitage, perhaps, sounding amidst the rocks and woods, or a thin wreath of smoke curling upwards, from the dense foliage. Occasionally a flock of goats might be seen suspended almost in the air, browsing among the cliffs, under the care of a wild-looking goat-herd, clothed in sheep-skins: while a *ratero*, or solitary footpad, would claim acquaintance with Diego, who seemed well known in these

parts; or a pilgrim to St. James of Compostella, with "cockle-shell and sandal shoon," would bestow a *benedicite* on the travellers.

Having now, thanks to the smugglers, a certain point to steer by; instead of going, at the mercy of chance, to some distant part of the British lines, which necessarily occupied an extended space of country, Diego took his measures accordingly. Being himself a very active smuggler, as indeed the guerrilleros generally were; he knew every track in this part of the Peninsula, highway and bye-way; and could calculate to a nicety the places to be avoided, and the retired ventas where we could safely stop for rest and refreshment.

In this manner, making a detour to avoid Villa Real, we crossed the Duero between Lamego and Miranda; then veering to the left, we struck off direct for Ciudad Rodrigo. For two days longer, we thus continued riding without interruption; for, if any curiosity was excited by my appearance, it was easily satisfied by a mysterious whisper from Diego, that I was a young Castilian lady, going to pay a visit to *el gran Lor*: that awful name checked all importunity, and convinced the simple querists that all was right.

On the evening of the third day, we perceived indications of approaching an outpost. First, some soldiers appeared, sauntering about the fields and deserted houses, in search of plunder or amusement. To my great delight some of them belonged to my own regiment, and it was with the utmost difficulty I restrained myself from speaking to them. Next I heard some drummer-boys and buglers practising their respective instruments, and a juvenile fifer essaying the national anthem: then a redoubt or two appeared, with a sentry walking on the platform, who luckily took no notice of me; the apparition of one of the fair sex at this out-quarter being, perhaps, of somewhat frequent occurrence. To these succeeded the shambles of the meat contractor; the commissariat stores; and the hospital, with several patients in their flannel gowns, walking up and down before the doors; or a wounded man brought in on a stretcher from the out-lying picket, on the left bank of the Agueda. Objects, in short, long familiar to my sight, and dear to my heart, multiplied at every step I took, till I found myself at the entrance of a village, which Diego and I rode boldly into.

We had not proceeded far when we approached three or four officers, walking leisurely before us, chatting and laughing merrily. They were all strangers to me except one; and him I should know amongst a thousand, by his portly person, his rubicund visage, and his clear hilarious laugh, which rang out good-humouredly above all the rest. Having no doubt as to the identity of this individual, I shouted at the very top of my voice,—

"Jack Dillon from Navan!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LIGHT DIVISION.

THE strangers all turned round and approached me, with evident symptoms of surprise and curiosity, till at last Dillon himself, after staring at me for awhile, exclaimed:—

“By the powers, ’tis Percy Blake of ours!”

“Nonsense!” said one, “’tis a woman!”

“’Tis a *buena muchacha*,” said another, “and not a bad-looking girl either, on a march.”

“Then it must be his sister,” said Dillon “for I never say any two faces so like one another, and I never saw hers at all, at all.”

A general laugh pealed forth at Dillon’s bull, in which I heartily joined as the party approached.

“Ah, then, Percy, my boy,” said Dillon, “is it you or your sister? and which of the heavenly elements have you dropt from, a *cushla*?”

“Help me to alight, Jack,” I said, “I have been a whole week on this cursed packsaddle, and have lost the use of my limbs.”

Dillon accordingly lifted me off my mule in his brawny arms, and I was introduced to his companions, officers of the 43rd, one of the distinguished regiments of the Light Division, who gave me a most cordial reception.

I now turned to Diego, and putting my last two doubloons into his hand, I released him from all further attendance, and desired him to present my kind and grateful regards to Don Pedro and Doña Maria. With many thanks and good wishes Diego took his leave, praying that my excellency might live a thousand years.

“Well,” said Dillon, “this beats Banagher and Ballinasloe, to see you drop amongst us like one of the *howrees* of the Turks, so transmogrified that if I didn’t know your face by the sound of your voice, I’d swear you had been changed at nurse, *alanuv*.”

Dillon’s merry companions seemed to hang so entirely on every word he uttered as mirth-exciting, that even this hackeyed bull produced a laugh from them; while he, unconscious that they more frequently laughed at him than with him, went on his own free and easy way, as usual.

“And to hear you gabbling Spanish,” he continued, “like a three-year-old, when I have been amongst the Dons and High Dolgoes for a month of Sundays, and I can’t say *thourem pogue ma cauleen ogue* yet in any language but my own. The first of the Blakes must surely have been a top-sawyer at the tower of Babylon, and left you the gift of the gab as a codicil.”

After another explosion of laughter, in which Dillon joined uproariously at his own wit, we adjourned to the quarters of one of my new friends, where cigars and cognac being produced *ad libitum*, I gave

them a relation of my adventures by sea and land, which very much excited their wonder and amusement. They explained to me in turn, the present posture of affairs at this advanced outpost of the British army, which was briefly as follows :—

The Light Division, under General Crawford, consisted of the 43rd, 52nd, and 95th, regiments of the line, with the First German Hussars, a troop of horse artillery, and two battalions of Caçadores (Portuguese light infantry), numbering in all about four thousand bayonets. It was stationed in advance of the river Coa (the boundary between Spain and Portugal), the principal quarters being Gallegos and Barba del Puerco, where I had just arrived. The outlying pickets were furnished alternately by the three regiments; and as the French in overwhelming force were about to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo, which was only two or three miles beyond our advance at Gallegos, our troops were greatly harassed by the severity of the duty, an attack being almost hourly expected.

"Luckily," said one of the 43rd, "we have an excellent backer; for Picton with the fighting division is at Pinhel, a few miles only in our rear."

"'Tis little good that will do you," said Dillon. "He loves Crawford as the devil does holy water, and wouldn't be sorry to see him get a licking before he came to his assistance."

These words of my eccentric friend proved prophetic at a critical moment not long after.

"Matters being in this ticklish position then," I said, "I must get rid of this female togger as soon as possible. Where are our lads quartered, Dillon?"

"At Gallegos," replied Dillon. "You are now at Barba del Puerco, or if you like it better in English, at the 'Pig's Beard.' I have heard of a pig's whistle before now, but they wear imperials, it seems, in this country."

"I dare say I can get a rig out amongst them," I observed, "for I have come, as you see, in very light marching order."

"Oh, Father Tim will do your business in that way," said Dillon, winking at his companions.

"Who is he?" I demanded.

"I'll introduce you to his reverence," said Dillon drily.

"But perhaps Conolly is come up," I said, "with my baggage from Lisbon."

"Perhaps so," said Dillon mysteriously.

"In that case," I said, "I shall soon be in skirmishing order. Come, Jack, let us start."

"Fair and aisy," said Dillon. "Wait till nightfall; for if they saw me walking with you in that trim I should lose my character as an immaculate Benedick."

Accordingly, after chatting with my new friends for another hour, we bade them adieu, and started for Gallegos, a few miles in advance, between the Agueda and the Coa. We soon reached the narrow bridge of San Felices, which spans the rapid current of the former, where we fell in with a guard of the 52nd; the cracking of rifles and

the whistling of balls becoming more perceptible as we neared the outlying pickets of the two armies. As we thus jog along, challenged by sentries, scrutinized by patrols, who thought me a very suspicious-looking person, and stumbling on fatigue parties in the dark, laden with sandbags and fascines for the front or wounded men for the rear, it will not be a bad opportunity to introduce to the reader's acquaintance Jack Dillon from Navan.

Jack was as brave a fellow as ever drew a sword, and with his rubicund visage and portly person, the *beau-ideal* of jollity and good-humour. He had been a bit of a dunce at school, and did not improve much since he had left it; but he had a great deal of what is called "mother wit," with a national tendency to bull-making, which formed such a delightful compound as made him a general object of attraction to all the young fellows of the brigade, by a bevy of whom he was always surrounded.

But Dillon's peculiar talent was the grace and elegance with which he sang the Irish melodies: for though one might naturally expect from him such versions as "Would you task the moon-tied hair," he was on the contrary, not only perfectly correct in his reading, but singularly accurate in character and expression; while his voice, which was melody itself, was modulated as it were by instinct, for he knew no more about gamut or solfa than he did about Greek, which he called the language of those old Turks the Romans.

Strange to say, Dillon had never been in England; having come, as he himself described it, by a side wind from Cork to Lisbon, "which brought me over, you see, by way of a slope," said Jack, "without touching the stepmother country at all, at all." He might, therefore, be held excusable for believing that an Irish city was the finest thing in nature, and Navan the first of Irish cities, "barrin' Dublin, perhaps." He accordingly wrote himself down, with becoming pride, as "Jack Dillon from Navan," on his cards, his trunks, and occasionally, indeed, in his guard reports, when he happened to have a drop in his eye; and by this style and title he was better known in the Peninsula than by any other.

We arrived at length at Gallegos, which, as usual, I found to consist of narrow winding streets and grated windows. This small place, which was only three or four miles from Ciudad Rodrigo, having been abandoned by its inhabitants, the houses were all occupied by our Light Bobs; the church, a large respectable building, being appropriated as an hospital. Into this we took a peep *en passant*, and found it pretty well filled with sick and wounded, ranged along the walls, and lying upon thick straw mattresses on the floor, while medical men and hospital orderlies were bustling about in all directions, and the groans of a poor fellow suffering amputation sounded ominously to the ear.

Having groped our way for some time through the proverbial dirt and darkness of this truly Spanish village, we came to a small shop that was dimly lighted with one or two iron lamps, in which very rancid oil was burning.

"This," said Dillon, "is the residence of Father Tim. Just place

yourself here beside the door, and you'll be able to form some idea of his reverence."

I did so accordingly, and looked into the shop, which was very sparingly furnished with three or four casks of different shapes and sizes, and a few pig-skins, apparently filled with wine; one of the casks being labelled "ACCADENTE," another "CO-NI-AC," and a third "MOLLYGO."

Behind the counter stood Father Tim himself, a young man evidently, though enveloped in the capacious white habit of a Dominican friar, while his head was covered with the huge canoe-shaped hat of that distinguished order. He was occupied apparently in counting upon his fingers, muttering to himself, and scolding a Portuguese boy that he called José, who was washing tumblers and glasses by his side, to help the customers who came in for wine or spirits; while, as Father Tim had occasion to move about his shop, he carried in his hand to light his steps one of those immense waxen tapers that decorate the altars in Catholic countries.

"Now, José, you thief," said Father Tim, in English, "if you break any more of them glasses, I'll turn you out on the *shokheraun*, and 'tis thinking I am you'll be sorry enough when you go back to your own beggarly home, from the good aiting and dhrinking, and iligant dhry lodgins you find undher my counther here, you thief o' the world!"

"Why, good heavens!" I exclaimed to Dillon, "'tis Conolly!"

"Hush, hush!" said Dillon, bursting with laughter, "be silent for awhile, or you'll spoil sport."

"If you please, Father Tim," said a soldier's wife, who had just entered the shop, "I'll be greatly obliged to you for a pint of Accadente."

"Yes, ma'am," said Father Tim, who didn't seem, however, to relish her extra politeness; "but remember my sign, ma'am, if you please."

The woman cast her eye with a doleful expression on a large placard, upon which was written, in very legible characters, the following pithy distich:—

"Neither tick nor trust,
But down with your dust!"

"Well, then, Father Tim," said the lady, in a wheedling voice, "'tis a little short I am at present, but I'll pay you to-morrow, for I have a washing-bill due me by Ensign Battersby."

"This is the tenth time I have heard of that washing-bill," said Father Tim; "but it's no go, ma'am."

"Milia murther!" cried the applicant, "what'll I do now? My poor man is going on outlying picket to-night, and he hasn't a toothful to comfort him."

"Can't help it, ma'am," replied Father Tim. "I can't pay house-rent and servant's wages, and feed such a gormandizing thief as José, upon tick, ma'am."

The poor woman turned to leave the shop, but as she came out of

the door Dillon put a peseta* into her hand, and placed his finger on his lips at the same time. This enabled her to get a whole bottle of Accadente to comfort her poor man on outlying picket, and Father Tim was all smiles and complaisance at sight of the coin.

The soldier's wife was succeeded by an urchin not so high as the counter, who called out lustily, however,—

"Fader Tim! Fader Tim!"

"Well, my man," said Father Tim, "what is it you want?"

"Please sir," replied the youngster, "daddy says you haven't ped him yet for de Frenchman's goold watch he sold you."

"Gold, you desaiver!" cried Father Tim. "'Twas only pinchback, and not worth five shillings."

"Please, Fader Tim," said the young negotiator, "daddy says he has no dejection to take it out in liquor, if it's all de same to you."

"Very well," said Father Tim, "how much do you want now?"

"A bottle for daddy," said young hopeful, "and a sup for meself."

Father Tim immediately supplied the wants of his young customer, who exclaimed as he went away smacking his lips,—

"Oh, be de hokey, isn't dat bang-up!"

After one or two more scenes of this nature, which exhibited the shrewdness of Father Tim, as well as his love of money, Dillon and I entered the shop, the former calling for a pint of Malaga.

"Yes, captain," said Father Tim, with great alacrity. "I hope your honour's well, sir; and is this your honour's lady, sir?" Here he gave me a good long stare, while I looked exceedingly demure. "She's a Spanish, I suppose, captain, by her mantile-o, and doesn't speak English." Here he gave another look. "Will you have the dry or the sweet Mollygo, captain?"

"Dry for me," replied Dillon, "sweet for the lady."

Here Father Tim went to one of his barrels and turned the cock; but he couldn't help giving me another look over his shoulder, when exclaiming—

"Heavenly Mary! 'tis the masther!"

Down dropped the vessel in which he was drawing the wine, and without waiting to stop the cock, poor Conolly threw himself at my feet, seized my hand, and kissing it repeatedly, blubbered forth—

"Thank Heaven and all the blessed saints that I see you once more alive; and the blaggards told me you were kilt in a jewel. José, you thief o' the world! Why don't you stop that cock, an' all the liquor running about? Oh, captain, dear, what a joker you are, with your 'dry for myself,' an' your 'sweet for the lady.' José, snuff that candle, or I'll brain you—don't you see there's a thief in it, and itself a holy candle, to boot. And my own dear master is come back to us again to shoot the Tooraloos; bad seran to them for making a hole in my beautiful pigskin of Mollygo, the other night, with a rifle-ball."

"Well, Conolly," I said, interrupting his miscellaneous eloquence.

"You seem to be driving a pretty brisk trade here."

"And thanks to his honour Captain Dillon for that same, sir,"

* A Spanish coin, about eightpence in value.

replied Conolly. "Sure he got me excused from guards and parades, and outlying picket, that I might look after your honour's baggage, and save it from the rogues and rapparees."

"And where is my baggage?" I demanded.

"Where would it be, but in your quarters, sir?" replied Conolly.

"Where are they?" I asked.

"Here, sir, up stairs to be sure," replied Conolly. "Oh! praise be to the Vargin, if I haven't got you as snug billet as ever you sot eyes on, in spite of the quartermaster-sergeant, who wanted it for himself, indeed; only his honour Captain Dillon stood in the gap, and defeated the ininy. And, by the same token, as there was a nice little bit of a shop belonging to it, I thought, your honour, I couldn't do better than turn an honest penny in it."

"But how have you escaped the provost-marshal, in so doing?" I demanded.

"Oh, the provo and I is as thick as thieves," replied Conolly; "and I'll engage the daisant man never wants for a toothful of Accadente, or a go of Co-ni-ac, on a winter's night, or a frosty morning, when he's going his rounds. 'All I ask of you Maister Conolly,' says he, 'is to keep yer hands frac peeking and stealing,' says he."

"'Oh, tear an ages! Sergeant Jameson,' I said to him, 'how could you think I'd ever do sich a thing?'"

"'Hoot awa, mon!' says he, 'dinna ye think I have heerd tell about the cuckoo-clock, in the island of Walcherecu?'"

"Murder will out, Conolly," said Dillon.

"Now, Conolly," I said, "let me see my quarters; for I am both tired and hungry."

"To be sure, sir; this way, yer honour," said Conolly, taking two of the holy candles in his hands, to marshal me the way, as I have seen royalty lighted to its opera-box by an obsequious manager. Before he went, however, he called out to his *locum tenens*:

"You José, mind the shop till I come back; and if you drink any more of that Molly-go, I'll throttle you, you thief."

Conolly now led the way up stairs into a very nice room indeed, for a Spanish house; and here I found all my baggage safe, and in good order.

"There they are, sir," said Conolly, with an expression of laudable pride. "Six of all sizes, from the big bed-chest, down to the little portmantle, all in rotation, like huckster's turf; and many a hard fight I had, as his honour the captain knows, to get 'em up here from Lisbon, what with quartermasters, and quartermaster-sergeants, and commissary's clerks; but I bamboozled 'em all, for I borrowed the colonel's canvass cases for them, with his name painted in full, and then who dar say paise?"

"What did the colonel do in the mean time?" I asked.

"Sure I knew before any one else did," replied Conolly, "through his servant, an old friend of mine, that he was going to stop at Lisbon for three weeks; and by that time I had 'em all sent back."

"You're a wonderful fellow, Conolly," I said, "but you must cut the shop."

"Oh, Master Percy!" exclaimed Conolly, "isn't this a poor case, an' I making sich a mint o' money. Besides, yer honour, 'tisn't a shop after all, but a wine-store, as they call it in this country; and sure I don't sell any of the vulgar commodities, as soap, candles, treacle, and hog's puddings, only the genteelest of Co-ni-ac and Molly-go."

"You must also," I said, "give up that clerical habit that has made such a guy of you. Pray where did you get it?"

"The what do you call it, sir?" said Conolly. "Oh! I know what you mean. Sure it belonged to Father Tomio, who lived here till he died one day, and left it to me in his will, with four holy candles that we used at his berrin, and a holy water brush."

"Did he die here?" I demanded.

"In this very room, sir," replied Conolly. "But you needn't be afraid, Master Percy; for I had his sperrit laid in the Red Sea, with bell, book, and candle."

My considerate valet now lit a fire on the capacious hearth, and fried some excellent rashers of Estremadura hog, with eggs "hot from the hen," as he expressed himself; and some of our lads who knew me, with others who did not, but were dying to hear my strange adventures, having dropped in, we passed a pleasant evening, with the aid of cigars and Mr. Conolly's Co-ni-ac. That night I slept in clover in my own camp-bed; and made my appearance on parade at three o'clock the following morning, once more every inch a Light Bob.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OUTLYING PICKET.

It was the merry month of May, and everything was bright, cheerful, and brilliant at Gallegos; where, under the auspices of Jack Dillon, to whose company I was posted, and some other old hands, we established a very comfortable field mess in the principal house of the place, which had belonged to the alcalde. Here we kept up a very friendly and familiar intercourse with the other two regiments of our brigade, which were quartered at Barba del Puerco, and other neighbouring villages, being mutually honorary members of each other's messes, and paying each other frequent visits; on which occasions I used to enjoy amazingly a ramble through the woods of cork and olive trees that lay between our respective quarters.

We not unfrequently, also, got up little entertainments for the simple and worthy Leonese, in whose "kingdom" we now were; at which the *charros* and *charras*, or dandies and dandyzettes of Leon, exhibited their graceful forms and picturesque costumes, for the admiration of their English friends. Nor were they remiss in the duties of hospitality themselves; but returned our civilities with warm and

pressing invitations to their cattle-brandings, marriages, and family feasts; on which occasions they kept open house, with a profusion of eating, drinking, singing, and dancing, that pleasingly reminded us of the wedding of Camacho.

Meanwhile, the horizon began to lower in the direction of the Pyrenees; and the Gallic cock to flap his wings, as if all in reality was over, but the final crow of triumph. The peace concluded at Vienna in 1809 having released France from all her northern wars, Napoleon announced his intention of "drowning the Leopard;" and accordingly sent powerful supplies to Spain, for the invasion of Portugal and the expulsion of the English.

The French army destined for this invasion amounted to eighty thousand men, in three divisions, under Marshals Ney, Junot, and Reynier; the command in chief being vested in Marshal Massena. To oppose this multitude of tried and hardy warriors, accustomed to conquest over all the rest of Europe, Lord Wellington had only thirty thousand English, and as many Portuguese, regular troops; exclusive of several flying corps of Portuguese militia, led by chiefs of their own nation, or by English officers; and levies *en masse*, known by the name of *Ordenanzas*, to the number of forty thousand more.

With an army of so heterogeneous a character, Lord Wellington could not think of giving battle on the plains of Salamanca, where his enemy presented a numerous and formidable body of cavalry: he, therefore, strictly confined himself to the defence of Portugal, and would not move a step from the position his troops now occupied on the frontiers of that kingdom, in spite of all the provocations of the French.

Early in May, Massena prepared for active operations, and invested Ciudad Rodrigo, then in possession of the Spaniards; the siege operations being carried on by Junot with forty thousand men, while Ney effectually covered him with thirty thousand more. In front of this overwhelming force, our Light Division could of course do nothing, but closely observe the enemy; and though we were reinforced by the 14th and 16th Light Dragoons, and also by Julian Sanchez and Carrera's divisions, still, expecting an almost daily attack, the duty was sufficiently harassing both for men and officers.

This new campaign opened with something of a savage character; for, during the early part of the siege, our respective pickets were constantly in the habit of firing at each other, which occasioned a number of needless casualties, that could have no possible influence on the final result. Subsequently, however, as if by mutual consent, this sanguinary system was discontinued, and a better understanding established with the enemy, which tended greatly to soften the horrors of war.

Under the guarantee of this tacit agreement, it was by no means uncommon to see men and officers on both sides conversing together, joking with each other on the events of the campaign, and its probable termination; or sharing freely with their respective enemies little comforts and luxuries which, in ordinary life, we only bestow upon private friends. In no instance, was this mutual confidence

betrayed by even a chance shot, though both sides were at times prepared for a sudden and unexpected resumption of hostilities.

Meanwhile, the garrison of Rodrigo, consisting of four thousand men under the old governor Hervasti, made a most gallant defence; and though the fortifications were in very bad condition, they for a long time kept the besiegers at bay, in spite of their numerical and scientific superiority. During this period, the shot and shell practice of both parties reminded me forcibly of the siege of Flushing; especially at night, when the star-like progress of the shells to and from the beleaguered city, was watched by us with intense interest; as we wiled away the long hours on outlying picket, about three miles from the city. This latter we could plainly discern from the rising ground we occupied, standing as it did on a gentle eminence above the Agueda, whose waters bathed the foot of its ramparts.

"They're exactly like falling stars," said Dillon, one night in the early part of July. "I wonder if they have the same virtue as the stars in Ireland."

"What may that be?" demanded one of the companions of our watch.

"Well, they say," replied Dillon, "that when you see a star falling, if you only pray for the grace of God you'll be sure to get it."

"Did you ever try the experiment, Jack?" demanded another.

"I did then, wanst," replied Dillon; "and faith, I think I have been a great deal more graceful ever since."

"Especially," I observed, "in a fandango or a bolero."

"Oh, trumpery Moses," cried Dillon, for this was his version of a hackneyed Latin phrase; "you may talk as you will about fandangoes and bullerows, but I prefer a good supper and a glass of toddy to the whole biling of 'em. So come here, Conolly, and lay the tablecloth for us."

Mr. Conolly accordingly came forward, and, unrolling a piece of sail-cloth on the ground before us, it was soon laden with the midnight pic-nic of half a dozen officers of the picket, consisting of ham, cold roast turkey, roast beef, boiled ship's pork, bread, cheese, and Spanish onions, with sundry canteens of brandy, wine, and aguardiente, though the latter spirit was not a favourite with any but the most recent arrivals from Lisbon.

Every man being furnished with his own case knife and fork, we set-to with very little ceremony, and in right good earnest, to make a suitable transfer of the viands before us: and in the course of half an hour they were so marvellously diminished, that Conolly and his assistants were directed to make themselves comfortable with the remnants, while we smoked our cigars and resumed our chat—each with a horn or a pewter drinking-cup in his hand, replenished with Cogniac, or the generous juice of the Lusitanian grape.

The position we occupied was on the slope of a hill, screened by an olive-grove, from which we had a very good view of the bombardment, the night being dark, and therefore more favourable for observation.

"The French are going it, and no mistake," said Dillon. "One

would think Junot was determined to blow up the whole city to-night, that he may march into it peaceably in the morning."

"There's a volley of a dozen shells from one battery," said Markham, of the 95th. "See how they seem to roll and tumble over each other in mazy circles, yet each keeping its own parabolic curvature."

"Oh, trumpery Moses," cried Dillon, "I never heard such a shalabala of a word as that before."

"Never mind him," said Middleton, "he's fresh from Sandhurst, and coins words like winking. But tell me, Jack, do you remember the day we crossed the Tagus at the bridge of Arzobispo, after the battle of Talavera?"

"Don't I," replied Dillon. "Ay, and a mighty droll circumstance took place that same night between myself and one of them triangling chaps."

"Whom do you call triangling chaps?" I asked.

"One of them engineer fellows," replied Dillon, "that makes you believe they are always working pollyollygrams and other riddlemerees, with the cute angles and abstruse angles of one Matthew Maddox. I wonder why the man invented so much balderdash for my own part, one good bayonet-charge is worth the whole biling of it."

An explosion of merriment from his auditors confirmed Dillon in the infallibility of his opinion, and he went on with the relation of his adventure.

"I was on outlying picket that night," said Dillon, "with nothing betune us and the enemy but that nice little trout-strame, the Tagus. The evening had passed over very quietly, and so had the night too, for the parley-vous didn't seem inclined to have any more of it for the present. So, towards morning, as everything promised to be very peaceable, I threw myself down in my old cloak to get a bit of a snooze, and was just going off nicely in a comfortable doldrum, when I suddenly heard the sentry call out,

"'Who goes there?'

"'Rounds!' said some one.

"'What rounds?' cried the sentry.

"'Grand rounds,' said the other.

"'Stand grand rounds,' said the sentry, 'advance one and give the countersign. Picket turn out.'

"Up I jumped, and my mind misgave me; for, thinking the field officer of the day had forgotten me altogether, I had given leave to half a dozen men to go and look at a convent that was close by the picket-house, and I thought perhaps a dozen others might have gone with them, on French leave, knowing they had an easy-going fellow to deal with in me.

"So out I sallied with the poker in my hand, for I couldn't find my sword in the dark, and it was just as I thought—the rascals had been treated to all sorts of wine and spirits by the jolly old padrees, and may I never die a sinner but every man of the picket was blind drunk except three out of the thirty.

"I made the most of them, however. I drew them up in a line, and gave the word 'Present arms' with a thundering voice; but, fortu-

nately for me, it was pitch-dark, and the field officer of the day was old Spry, of the engineers, who couldn't see beyond the tip of his nose. So he came close up to me, and I standing well in front with the poker across my breast.

"Anything new at your post, Captain Dillon?" says he.

"Nothing at all, colonel," says I, "but a great shinty the French tooraloos are kicking up on the other side. I'm thinking its firing a fudy-joy they are; but its mighty little they have to do with their powder and shot to be wasting it in that fashion."

"That we have nothing to do with," said the colonel. "Your business is to keep a good look out on them, which I hope you will do. I myself am always particularly sharp in front of an enemy;" and as he said this the poor little man's nose was all but rubbing against the poker I held in my hand.

"I'll be bound," says I, "that none of 'em shall come to the blind side of you, colonel, while I'm here, at all events."

"He chuckled at the idea of any one coming to the blind side of him under any circumstances, and then said I might turn in my picket.

"I accordingly sang out as if I was manœuvring a brigade, 'Rear rank take close order!' and I had only a front rank of three men all the time. 'Recover arms, lodge arms.' For the honour of the regiment the poor fellows made as much noise as they could; but, oh trumperry Moses, that was no great shakes, as you may suppose.

"'Tis singular," said old Spry, in his pompous way, "how sounds are deadened by the dense fog that prevails at this time of the morning. Now I could almost have sworn you had only half a dozen men in your picket if I hadn't counted thirty with my own eyes. Pray, Captain Dillon—ahem—have you ever studied the science of a cow's stick?"*

"Yes, colonel," I replied, "I used to handle it nicely, and wallop 'em well with it when I was a boy."

"Wallop whom?" demanded old Spry.

"The cows to be sure," I replied, "with the stick you mentioned, when they used to come trespassing on my mother's little property down at Ballynahinch."

"You are pleased to be facetious, Captain Dillon," said the old fellow, with a toss of the head. "Good morning to you, sir."

"Capital, capital!" we all exclaimed, "you had the triangling chap completely on the hip there, Jack."

"Faith," said Dillon, "he might have fancied me a queer fellow, but I think his own conduct on the occasion was exceedingly superfluous."

This was Dillon's pronunciation of a word, the meaning of which he also perverted into something insolent or hostile. It elicited, of course, another burst of laughter, which resounded strangely in the stillness of the night amongst the fantastic shapes of the olive-trees, and within pistol-shot of the enemy's pickets.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE PASSAGE OF THE COA.

"THERE'S a beautiful flight of rockets," some one observed, when we had recovered from our merriment. "With what intense fury they rush through the air, leaving a train of demoniac fire behind them in their fiend-like course."

"Woe betide the poor souls," said another, "that come within their deadly influence."

"And hark," said a third, "to that shower of 24-pounders as they rattle against the old walls, tearing them to fragments, and pulverizing the very stones that compose them."

These words were scarcely uttered, when a sudden concussion of the ground upon which we were seated threw us in confusion upon one another, and we all jumped upon our feet, exclaiming, "An earthquake! an earthquake!"

But, looking towards the unfortunate city, we beheld a vivid column of flame shoot up into the air, accompanied by a tremendous roaring sound, as if the great globe itself was suddenly rent asunder. Immediately after, a mass of light-coloured smoke hovered over Rodrigo, forming a strange unearthly contrast with the surrounding darkness, till, after several prismatic changes, it insensibly mingled with the sable aspect of the sky. A dismal silence fell upon the devoted city, as if all its inhabitants had perished in the fearful explosion, while three distinct hurrahs resounding from the besieging enemy up the high grounds we occupied, told but too plainly the nature of the disaster.

"'Tis the principal magazine," said Middleton. "Poor Rodrigo is done for."

"If that's the case," said Dillon, "look out, gentlemen, we shall have some news before morning."

The accuracy of this prediction was evinced in half an hour after, when the clattering of a horse's feet up the rocky steep attracted our attention; and a German vidette, dashing forward, reported the immediate approach of the enemy. In ten minutes more we were engaged, and the whistling of some thousand rifle-balls succeeded our after-supper merriment in the olive-grove.

Day at length broke, and found us *in statu quo*; for we maintained our position against a very fierce attack by a *reconnaissance* of five cavalry regiments, a corps of infantry, and some field-pieces. Having failed in beating us up, their bugles sounded, and they retired; leaving a good many killed and wounded on the hill, with a comparatively trifling loss on our side.

But the explosion of the magazine having compelled the brave old Hervasti to capitulate on the 10th of July, the French, no longer detained by the siege, now advanced in overwhelming numbers; we

were consequently obliged to give up Gallegos, and retire upon the Coa.

A series of movements consequent on the fall of Rodrigo, now took place between the contending armies; for it was impossible to ascertain in what way Massena would follow up his success. The best arrangements were, however, made by Lord Wellington to meet every probable contingency; and, withdrawing the main body of his army a little in rear of his original position, the Light Division was still left in advance on the right bank of the Coa: but General Crawford was particularly directed to avoid a battle; and should the French advance in force, to give way at once, and retire across the river.

Retreat, however, was a word which the gallant Crawford seems to have expunged altogether from his vocabulary: for, instead of passing the Coa, as he might easily have done on the 21st of July, when apprised that the French were advancing in force, he drew up the Light Division in line, with the river in his rear; determined, apparently, to resist with his small body the forward and overwhelming movement of the enemy.

"This is beautiful," said Dillon to me in a whisper, as he led his company into the alignment. "You have now a double chance of promotion, Percy; for if I am not shot by the French, I shall be drowned in the Coa."

On the night of the 23rd of July, I was on outlying picket; and as our sentries were within pistol-shot of the enemy's, "ware hawk" was the word and no favours granted. The caution being given to lie close, every stump of a tree, or fragment of a rock covered its man; and every forage cap that made its appearance, had a musket or a rifle ball through it very speedily.

Not having, of course, slept a wink during the night, which was very sultry, my eyes began to get heavy towards morning. The profound silence that reigned in the enemy's lines having led me to imagine that all was right, for I had not yet learned to judge of events by the rule of contrary, I began to "nid, nid, nod," as I leaned standing against the trunk of an olive-tree; when I was effectually roused by a sudden rush, and a French "hourrah!" accompanied by a roar of musketry which ran along the whole front of our outposts.

The appropriate answer to this early salute was a thoroughly English "Huzza!" and a corresponding roar of musketry, which doubtless carried death to many a stout heart: for the enemy's *tirailleurs* advanced in the grey of the morning, with all the effrontery peculiar to the French, as if determined to sweep us from the face of the earth. They were met, however, with a boldness that for a moment checked their vivacity: but their numbers were overwhelming; the centre of Crawford's position being attacked by an entire corps, amounting to eighteen thousand men, of whom three or four thousand were cavalry, with a numerous and well-appointed artillery.

They passed the Azava, a river in our front, about sunrise: and

their cavalry, driving in our advanced videttes, came on with great rapidity; three regiments on the direct road from Gallegos to Almeida, and two by a path to the left, with the view of turning our right flank. They were checked, but for a moment, by the fire of our horse-artillery, stationed at a small brook in the rear of Gallegos; and also by a gallant charge of German hussars; who, having sabred a number of the enemy, and driven them back across the stream, were received on their return by the cheers of the whole line, which had witnessed the exploit.

Still, however, the enemy continued to advance in numbers that could not be withstood; and our pickets between Villamula and Gallegos were driven back, skirmishing in beautiful order, and disputing every inch of ground: while the constant rattle of the rifles among the olive-trees, the rapid sounds of the bugles, and the shrill whistles of the officers made up a concert, which, if not so harmonious as one at Exeter Hall, was at least a thousand times more spirit-stirring.

From Villamula to the Coa the country consisted of an extensive plain, intersected by garden walls and farm enclosures, which offered a fine field for light-infantry manoeuvres. Of these advantages we availed ourselves to the uttermost: obstinately maintaining every house, wall, and fence that presented itself; and constantly checking the advance of the enemy's light troops, whose ranks were evidently thinned by our rapid and continuous fire.

But the heavy masses, though excessively galled by our incessant attacks, still pushed on, and the centre of our position was seriously threatened. Therefore, though the whole division, Portuguese as well as English, fought gallantly, they were reluctantly compelled to yield before oppressive numbers; till Crawford, perceiving that he could no longer hold his ground, determined, at last, when almost too late, to cross the river. He accordingly despatched his cavalry and artillery to the opposite bank; leaving his infantry, meanwhile, to cover the movement, and keep the enemy at bay.

If ever there was a pang of self-reproach in the breast of this brave officer for an obstinate adherence to a wrong course, he must have felt it at this moment; with an overwhelming enemy in front, and a deep and rapid current in his rear, spanned by a narrow bridge, his only means of retreat, and which lay completely exposed to a sweeping fire from the French artillery. To add to his mortification, General Pieton, who had come up alone from Pinhel, ungenerously refused him the support of the Third Division, which occasioned a pretty sharp altercation between these two gallant but irascible men.

There being now no alternative but a hasty and disadvantageous retreat, the infantry accordingly retired by an echelon movement to its left, covered by the skirmishers. The irregularity of the ground, and the frequency and height of the enclosures, rendered an orderly retreat almost impracticable, but the operation was boldly and coolly executed; while, to prevent the French from forcing the bridge, and allow time for the regiments to re-form, the 43rd and 95th, as they

gained the opposite bank, were drawn up in front of the pass, and directed to oppose to the last every attempt that the enemy should make to cross it. The latter, however, seemed equally determined; and being now collected in imposing force, a fierce and well-sustained attack produced one of the most desperate and sanguinary encounters to be found in the annals of modern warfare.

At this critical moment, the left wing of the 52nd, to which my company belonged, being the last on the field, was retiring in echelon of companies, the men loading as they went; but as the enemy were pressing rather close upon the rear, the word "double!" was given, and we trotted on in the direction of the bridge, which was still crowded with the passing troops. We at length had got within two hundred yards of the welcome asylum, when we heard something like what the French call a "hurricane of cavalry" behind us; and Major McLeod of the 43rd, turning his horse round, shouted in a voice of thunder:

"Flank company 'bout face! Ready, present, fire! Port arms! Charge bayonets! Charge!"

These words, given in rapid succession, produced corresponding actions on our sides, and never was manœuvre more critical or better timed: for the "hurricane" we had heard was the rush of five or six squadrons of horse chasseurs, who in five minutes more would have cut us up like *mouches*, and behind our backs, too, as Jack Dillon remarked.

Our volley, however, thrown right into the midst of them, emptied a score of saddles, and for a moment checked their headlong speed. Our charge, also, desperately made as it was, amidst repeated cheers which were re-echoed by the enemy, added greatly to their astonishment; for an infantry charge upon cavalry is not a thing of everyday occurrence; but they speedily rallied, and rode over us in overwhelming numbers; sabreing right and left, and cutting us up without mercy.

A dashing-looking officer, in a splendid uniform, singled me out for his especial amusement; and raised himself in his stirrups, as he flourished his sabre to give me the *coup de grâce*. I threw up my sword to guard my head; but a stray rifle-ball from the 95th snapped it like a bit of glass, at the very hilt, and knocked off my cap at the same time. I was thus doubly at the Frenchman's mercy, and expected in another instant to feel his sabre crashing through my brain; but he suddenly exclaimed: "Percy! c'est done toi, cher Percy!" Then, letting his sabre hang by the chain that bound it to his wrist, he threw his arms about my neck, and kissed me on both cheeks.

It was Adolphe Berton!

"Not a moment to be lost," cried Adolphe, as he beckoned a chasseur to his side, and bade him alight; "mount, and keep close to me, or you are lost."

I instantly sprang into the saddle, and kept closer to my excellent friend, through all the current of the heady fight, than any aide-de-camp ever did to his general. This I found was essentially neces-

sary; for we had peppered the chasseurs in a manner that made them quite savage, and many a *vieux moustache* looked disagreeably anxious to have a chop at my defenceless sconce.

This scene, now doubly terrible to me, was happily soon at an end; for our artillery on the other side of the Coa, having at length got the range, not only slaughtered a vast number of the chasseurs in a vain attempt to cross the bridge, but was knocking them over around me like rows of nine-pins. The order to retire was therefore issued, and we trotted off to the shelter of the French masses, a short distance from the sanguinary scene. But my company, alas! my cherished flank company, lay upon the field of their glory: they were sacrificed, but the regiment was saved; and, of eighty fine fellows who had composed it in the morning, only thirty-five rank and file repassed the Coa, with two officers out of five!

It was a deadly encounter; but though a needless expenditure of life was incurred, there was not a more brilliant affair during the whole war than that which crowned, on this memorable day, the gallant efforts of the Light Division.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FRENCH BIVOUAC.

"BON DIEU! Bon Dieu!" cried Adolphe, as we rode together, with slackened rein, into the cavalry lines; "what a lucky shot it was, cher Percy, that knocked your cap off! Otherwise I might have done a deed for which I would never have forgiven myself."

"You would have been perfectly excusable," I replied, "and, indeed, altogether unconscious of your victim; for I should have fallen, of course, unnoticed and unknown in such a *mêlée*."

"But, after all," said Berton, "it was a most singular escape, and proves upon what trivial chances our destinies hang in this miserable world."

"My estimable friend!" I exclaimed; "does it not rather prove the ever watchful care of Providence in the most desperate extremities?"

Berton willingly assented to what, in fact, could not be controverted; and, on arriving at the quarters of his regiment, the 9th chasseurs à cheval, in which he was a captain, he introduced me to all his brother officers. Having told them how deeply indebted he had formerly been to me, they shook hands with me heartily all round; seemed delighted to know me, and in half an hour we were like so many schoolfellows together.

"I must now," said Berton, go and report you to the general of division, Le Feuvre, who is a friend and patron of mine, and see if I can't get permission to have you at my bivouac on parole; you'll give your parole, of course."

"Certainly," I replied. "I am only too happy to leave all arrangements to so excellent a friend."

He went accordingly; and during his absence I amused myself looking round the bivouac, accompanied by one of my new friends.

The quarters of the 9th were in a small village and an adjoining vineyard: in the latter of which three or four ranges of temporary huts were erected, in the nicest possible order; and even decorated with a degree of taste, and an affectation of elegance, which an English soldier would have laughed at, but could not imitate.

The horses were all stabled on the ground floors of the village houses; the upper rooms being occupied by the officers, the staff of the regiment, and the troop quartermasters. Some of the small houses were appropriated to artisans, handicraftsmen, suttlers, and other useful followers of the camp; each establishment having an appropriate sign-board, painted, gilt, and otherwise ornamented.

On one of these was "*Au café de Mille Colonnes*;" on another, "*Restaurant à Vingt Sous*;" on a third, "*Blanchisseuse de l'Impératrice*;" on a fourth, "*Maréchal Ferrant au Roi de Rome*;" and on a fifth, "*Casine à la Vénitienne*;" this latter comprising what we would call a "Tea Garden," about forty feet square, and a *salon de danse* of half the dimensions. This place of amusement was generally filled of an evening with *sous-officiers*, sergeants, corporals, and private dragoons: who, at the conclusion of their day's work, amused themselves with coffee, draughts, dominoes, dancing, and playing the amiable to the *vivandières*, the *blanchisseuses*, and other ladies of the regiment, or division; who also assembled there to enjoy their *petits délassemens*.

As we stood looking in at this Peninsular casino, we were addressed by *la déesse*, who presided as usual behind a gilt *comptoir*, decorated with half a dozen flower-pots, statuettes, and alabaster vases, which were multiplied *mille fois* by two large mirrors with sundry cracks in them.

"Come in, gentlemen!" she exclaimed, with a bewitching smile; "come in, and choose a partner each for the dance."

We accepted the invitation, *sans façon*, and placed a *peseta* each on the *comptoir*, the ordinary price of admission; for which refreshments, also, consisting of *café*, *orgeat*, and *eau sucré*, were supplied *à discrétion*. We then made our bows respectively to a pretty *blanchisseuse*, and a lively *vivandière*, with whom we trod a measure to the music of "*Le premier violon de l'Empereur de Russie*," who sat alone in his glory, in a showy orchestra; rasping away those old quadrille tunes which have since become so fashionable, as "*Payne's First and Second Sets*," in our English ball-rooms.

From the casino *à la Vénitienne*, we passed on to a *guinguette*, which was pretty well filled with jovial troopers, one of whom called out:

"Ola, beau prisonnier! Allons! trinquons, et soyez bon camarade!"

"De tout mon cœur!" I replied; "*à ta santé, mon ami!*" and we clashed our glasses together, wishing each other all possible suc-

cess in love and war. This little act of civility I performed with so good a grace, that it won golden opinions for me; and amidst cries of "Bon enfant! beau garçon!" I was requested to sit down, and listen to a song.

I did so, accordingly; and as the composition was a curiosity, in its way, I here present the reader with the only two stanzas that still cling to my memory, and in the chorus of which I joined with all present.

CHANSON A BOIRE.

I.

Voulez-vous suivre un bon conseil,
Buvez avant que de vous battre:
A jeûne je vau**x** bien mon pareil,
Mais quand j'ai bien bu, j'en vau**x** quatre.
Versez donc, mes amis, versez!
Je n'en puis jamais assez boire;
Versez donc, mes amis, versez!
Je n'en puis jamais boire assez!

II.

S'il n'a pas fait un élément
De cette liqueur féconde,
Le Seigneur s'est montré prudent,
Nous eussions dessêché le monde!
Versez donc, mes amis, versez!
Je n'en puis jamais assez boire;
Versez donc, mes amis, versez!
Je n'en puis jamais boire assez!

My tour of inspection, which amused and interested me exceedingly, was just finished, when supper was announced, and I was ushered into the mess-room of the regiment, which made me blush for our own humble doings at Gallegos.

The table of the 9th chasseurs exhibited nothing whatever in the shape of crockery—no huge pans or *pucheros*—no horn or tin drinking-cups—no iron forks, or pewter spoons, such as we were content to put up with. Everything was served on plate or china; though, it must be confessed, there was an occasional discrepancy in the articles, that gave the whole rather a motley appearance: for instance, a massive silver tureen filled with *soupe à la Julienne*, occupied the top of the table, but the soup-ladle was of china: this arose from the fact that the two articles had been borrowed from the *quintas*, or country mansions, of different Spanish noblemen on the line of march. At the bottom was a richly chased silver dish, supporting a *gigot de mouton en papillotes*, the spoons and forks attached to which were gold: and so on of the other dishes and covers, which were all either gold or silver plate, or costly china, with silver forks and spoons; all too, apparently, of broken sets and different patterns.

The drinking-cups were generally gold or silver chalices, originally consecrated to the service of that religion which my new friends professed; while several silver branch-candlesticks, of different sizes and patterns, occupied the centre of the table; the room being

brilliantly illuminated with consecrated wax candles, transferred from the altar to the supper-table with as little ceremony as the rest. This was all very well for the French, who considered themselves in an enemy's country; but such a display at the mess of an English regiment would have justly forfeited the commissions of all concerned.

Before we sat down, my friend Berton congratulated me on having succeeded in his mission. To my great delight, I was allowed to remain with the 9th chasseurs, as a prisoner on parole; instead of being sent off with others to the north of Spain, or over the frontiers perhaps—a fate I most particularly dreaded.

I continued with these pleasant fellows for several weeks, during which I had the misery to witness some skirmishes as an idle spectator, but never once contemplated the possibility of escaping; as, independent of the disgrace I should thereby myself incur, such a step would most seriously compromise my generous friend and preserver.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BEAT-UP.

MEANWHILE, the movements of the two armies had assumed a complicated and serious character. The French having passed the Coa, Lord Wellington fell back to the gorges of the Estrella, where he could command a strong position, should Massena attempt to force an engagement. The Light Division was, therefore, marched to Celorico as I learned by a note from Dillon, who, I was delighted to find, had escaped the slaughter on the Coa; and the other divisions were quartered in the neighbouring towns of Alberca, Penhanças, Carapentra, Guarda, &c.

The French then invested Almeida, which fortress capitulated on the 27th of August; partly owing to the explosion of a magazine, and partly to the treachery of the Portuguese garrison. This event compelled Lord Wellington to place the Mondego between himself and the overwhelming force of Massena; and both armies manœuvred for some time on the opposite banks of this river.

On the 24th of September, the vanguard of the French, consisting principally of the 9th chasseurs, to which I was so unwillingly attached, arrived on the right bank of the Dao; the opposite one being occupied by the English pickets, which, I could perceive with a glass, consisted, as usual, of the Light Division. Oh! how my heart beat at sight of those well-known uniforms! How my ears tingled with delight at the inspiring sounds of those admirable bugles! How I sighed for a cheerful night once more with my old companions, when I heard them summoned to their unsophisticated dinner-table by the dear old glee of "Here's a health to all good lasses!" Silent and sad at the wretched position I then occupied, I retired from the more gorgeous table of my French entertainers, and threw myself on a bundle

of fresh straw, supplied for my bed, in a hut on the outskirts of the encampment.

The only bridge over the Dao not yet destroyed being in possession of a strong guard of British and Portuguese troops, with several field-pieces in position on the opposite bank, Massena's vanguard halted here for a day or two, till the infantry and artillery, which were detained by the badness of the roads, should come up to force the passage.

Our camp was laid out in a species of quadrangle, as far as the nature of the ground would permit, the horses being picketed in the centre; for, though the *chasseurs à cheval* had the character of being hard drinkers and reckless plunderers, the affection they bore to their horses was remarkable, and seemed, indeed, to produce a corresponding affinity of feeling on the part of the animal. Quarter and rear guards, of dismounted dragoons and some tirailleurs, who had been pushed forward on the horses' cruppers, were then established, and a few videttes thrown out in the direction of the bridge.

The over-weening confidence, however, with which the invading and invincible army of Massena was proceeding to "drown the leopards," had rendered their guards, I thought, rather careless in their watch. Some were sauntering about idly: others lying asleep upon the fragrant bed of gum-cistus that covered the ground in all directions; but the majority were talking, singing, and quaffing large goblets of Bucellas, and other rich Lusitanian wines.

It was, of course, no business of mine; but I said to myself, "I know what I should do were I in command of yonder picket at the bridge, and only suspected how idly you keep watch in the very teeth of an active enemy."

The night was very close and sultry, and it was long before I could shut my eyes; once or twice I was disturbed by the neighing of the horses, who seemed as restless as myself, being kept awake, doubtless, by the gad-flies, which are numerous and tormenting at this season of the year.

I fell into a slumber at length; but my sleep was disturbed by dreams of battle, murder, and sudden death. I must have been lying on my back, for a nightmare oppressed me, and as the demon hag played her fantastic tricks, I fancied myself, by turns, pursued by a fiend from which I had not the power to fly, and struggling under the lifted sabre of a French dragoon, while a "hurricane of cavalry" was thundering in my rear.

And loudly, too, did it seem to thunder, increasing every instant in velocity and fury, while rattling peals of musketry, intermingled with the crackling of flames, the shouts of victory, and the groans of the dying.

By an immense effort, as I fancied, I burst the bonds of sleep, to escape from my horrid vision, and, to my utter amazement, found myself enveloped in dense masses of suffocating smoke, the horizon all around reflecting a lurid glare, as eager and consuming flames rushed like wildfire from hut to hut. These being all made of highly inflammable materials, were ignited by the slightest spark, and con-

tributed their columns of mingled fire and smoke to the conflagration, while the long grass in which we were encamped, dried up and withered by the summer sun, added to the fearful blaze, and repeated explosions of cartridge-boxes and loaded rifles and carbines, increased the general uproar.

"Aux armes! aux armes! Sacre Jean foutres!" shouted the French, amidst volleys of musketry, which were doing execution amongst the confused masses that hurried bewildered from the burning huts.

"Les chevaux! les chevaux!" cried others; and in fact it was high time, for the poor animals were already half roasted in the centre of the burning camp, and were plunging and kicking violently to get free from their pickets.

They were at length released, rapidly bridled and saddled, and mounted dragoons might then be seen in all directions issuing from the flames, leaping their horses over the burning huts, and dashing with lightning speed to the rendezvous to repel the sudden attack; while the trumpeters, on their motionless chargers, poured forth inspiring bursts of brazen harmony, and pistols and carbines began to flash and rattle on the as yet invisible foe.

I thus found myself, as it were, between two fires, uncertain which way to turn me, and expecting a salute equally from friend and enemy; when a loud and thrilling cheer from English throats pealed up to heaven, while a formidable division of the 52nd, with their bayonets at the charge, broke through the dense mass of smoke which had hitherto concealed them from my view, and rushed past, led by an officer in front, who waved his sword frantically, as he roared in a voice of thunder,—

"Skiver the villains, my boys! Remember the Coa!"

"Jack Dillon!" I shouted. "Jack Dillon!"

But on he swept, with his gallant followers, amidst deafening cheers, which at last terminated in the short but terrific cry that precedes the plunge of the British bayonet.

The sound of a confused *mêlée* and death-struggle was audible for a few moments, succeeded by another truly British cheer; and then the measured tramp of many footsteps was heard approaching the spot where I stood. It was Dillon's party, returning in triumph from their successful charge, their bayonets dyed with Gallic blood from the point to the socket.

The moment Dillon saw me, he gave a shout of joy, and, clasping me in his arms, he cried,—

"Blessed St. Patrick and the Virgin Mary be praised! I have found him at last!"

A cheer from the men also greeted my appearance, and Jack continued,—

"Come on, Percy, my boy; we must get over the bridge, or the parley-vous will be down upon us, like shoals of herrings in Lough Swilly."

"My dear Dillon," I replied, "you seem to forget that I am a prisoner on parole."

"Oh, trumpery Moses! what has that to do with it?" asked Dillon, with a stare.

"For my own honour, and the honour of my friend," I said, "I cannot go with you."

"Haw! haw! haw!" cried Dillon, with a tremendous horse-laugh; "I'll soon settle that matter:" then, taking me by the arm, he placed me in the centre of the leading subdivision, exclaiming,—

"Sergeant O'Keefe, here's a French prisoner for you; if he attempts to escape, you only shoot him, that's all."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the sergeant; "we know how to take care of him."

The party now again moved on towards the bridge, our bugles sounding merrily in front, and all keeping a steady, quick step, till we got within two or three hundred yards; then an officer of artillery, whose battery was planted on a rising ground facing the bridge, on the opposite side, shouted through a speaking-trumpet,—

"Double! double! the French are upon you."

"Double!" cried Dillon; and off we set across the bridge, amidst the whistling of carbine-balls in our rear, which did little or no mischief.

We had scarcely crossed the bridge and wheeled into line on our side of the river, when the French squadrons came thundering down in great force, and the front sections, gallantly led, dashed forward upon the fatal barrier, not a shot being fired by us to check their ardour.

"Is the fuse all right, Sergeant Roberts?" demanded Captain Shackleton, of the artillery, whose formidable battery maintained an ominous silence.

"All right, sir, and all ready," was the reply.

"Fire, then!" exclaimed Shackleton; and the words had scarcely passed his lips, when a fearful explosion took place. The farthest arch of the bridge was lifted bodily into the air, with a shock like an earthquake, and scattered in ten thousand fragments, with every living thing upon it; men and horses falling in a dismal shower of mangled limbs and bodies into the deep and sullen current that rolled beneath.

Then pealed the musketry across the Dao, while the batteries opened with the rapidity and precision for which the British artillery is renowned; and before many minutes had elapsed, there was not a Frenchman visible on the opposite bank, but those that lay groaning, or silent and motionless, upon the ground.

This was what Massena, in his report of the occurrence, called driving the English pickets over the Dao.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BUSACO.

GREAT was the jubilation in the Light Division at the successful result of this chivy, as Dillon called it; and congratulations to myself, in particular, flowed in from every quarter, on my singular escape from captivity: this was the more unexpected, as a report had prevailed that, owing to the advance of the French troops, all their prisoners had been sent off to the frontier.

Every one came, of course, to hear my description of the French bivouac; and all were equally astonished and amused at the borrowed splendours of the Chasseurs' mess.

I had the honour, also, of being closeted with the gallant commander of the division, who questioned me very closely on the numerical strength, movements, and possible intentions of the enemy. Apparently satisfied with my replies on these subjects, as well as my capability as a linguist, he even hinted that he had a vacancy on his staff at my service.

But I hastily, and indeed foolishly, declined the honour; for, independent of the attachment I really felt for my brave companions, I was accustomed, like too many of the line, to look upon staff employ as specious idleness, and an aide-de-camp as little better than a head-lackey. Moreover, military glory won in the field, not in the cabinet, was the star I worshipped. I therefore stammered out, as an excuse for not gratefully accepting so distinguished an honour, that I had never yet been in general action, and was anxious to take an active part in a pitched battle.

"Then join your regiment, sir," said the general, with flashing eyes, and in his usual quick and fiery manner: "you'll soon be gratified."

But, in spite of all this, I was by no means satisfied with my own part in this brilliant affair. I was apprehensive that it would be called a breach of parole, and that it might entail unpleasant consequences on my noble friend Berton. I, therefore, wrote him a note, fully explanatory of all the circumstances; and stating that, if these did not appear sufficient to justify my conduct in his own eyes and those of his superior officers, I would return, *coûte qui coûte*, and again become his prisoner.

I despatched this note by a bugler of the French advance, their Light Infantry having now come up; and was gratified next day with the following answer, which relieved my mind from all further anxiety on the subject:—

"C'est la fortune de guerre, cher Percy! You are all the better for it, and I none the worse, except in the loss of your agreeable society. No blame can attach to either of us; therefore, set your

mind at rest. I trust, however, we shall meet again, under happier circumstances, until when,

“Believe me ever faithfully yours,
“ADOLPHE BERTON.”

From the movements which now took place between the contending armies, it was evident that a general action could no longer be avoided. The army of Massena, which he had concentrated at Vizeu, having advanced in force, that of the allies retired from their position in the finest order, and fell back upon the heights of Busaco.

This mountain range was about eight miles long, its right abutting on the river Mondego, and the left stretching over very difficult ground to the Sierra de Caramula. On the summit stood a convent surrounded by extensive woods; and this point was nearly three hundred feet high, though its elevation varied in different places. Such, in a few words, was the position occupied by fifty thousand British and Portuguese troops on the 26th of September, 1810; while sixty-five thousand French infantry, covered by a mass of voltigeurs, bivouacked at the foot of the mountain.

Our Light Division was posted in advance, in front of the left and left centre of the line, formed by the divisions of Sir Brent Spencer, and of Generals Picton, Leith, Hill, and Lowry Cole; while the cavalry, under Sir Stapleton Cotton, was posted in the rear. General Crawford had judiciously drawn up the main body of his line in a dip of the ground behind the steep crest of his position; while the rocks in front, and the whole face of the sierra, were crowded with our riflemen and caçadores.

It was evident that Massena intended to attack us on the following day, and nothing could have given us greater pleasure, for our position was all but impregnable: it occupied the summit of a steep and lofty mountain, whose rugged sides were exposed like the glacis of a fortress to the fire of its defenders, with the exception of a few wooded dells and hollows towards its base.

To facilitate the intended attack, the enemy's light troops were sent forward on the night of the 26th, by twos and threes, down the lowest part of the valley of the Mondego, to establish themselves unseen close to the pickets of the 3rd and Light Divisions; but our rifle companies and some caçadores being thrown forward, soon checked their insidious approaches.

Dillon's company, especially, was far in advance that night, more than half-way down the mountain: where we had made up as snug a bivouac for ourselves, in a deserted *posada*, as circumstances would permit.

The upper part of this house had been knocked to pieces by a heavy cannonade during the day; but the ground-floor, or stable, which was built of very solid mason work, with an arched roofing, as is common in the Peninsula, stood as firm as a rock. Here we had ensconced ourselves; keeping a sharp look-out on the enemy through the loopholes we had made in the wall; and laughing at their futile

efforts to dislodge us, as we enjoyed our cigars and toddy round a blazing fire, manufactured from the ruins of a staircase.

But though we were cozy enough in our sheltered nook, the night was bitterly cold on the summit of our position; exposed, as it was, to the north-west wind, which swept in fitful blasts over the mountain, and drove our troops to every sort of shelter which ingenuity could invent, or the most rigid watchfulness permit. Meanwhile the radical heat of canteens and pocket-pistols, as the gentle reader may conceive, was freely had recourse to, amongst other expedients, to expel the radical moisture, and enable our men to pass the night with some small degree of comparative comfort.

But these resources were, it seems, inadequate in all cases: for, while we were enjoying ourselves sociably in our bomb-proof bivouac, in bounced upon us suddenly three or four officers of Colonel R——'s regiment; who, unable to stand the cold on the summit of the hill, had ventured to quit the ranks, for the troops bivouacked in order of battle, and stole down shivering and shaking to warm their noses at our guard-fire.

Right welcome did we make the poor souls; and Dillon being a proverbially hospitable fellow, the glass circulated freely, while jovial toasts and merry jests went round, as if peace and plenty were smiling on the outside of our cozy retreat. The natural thirst, to which we were all rather subject, being greatly enhanced by some delicate morsels of Estremadura wild hog fresh from the woods, and broiled upon the embers, we passed a very merry evening, as may be imagined; till at length our weary guests, leaving us to our vigils, plunged into a huge mass of beautiful clean straw; where, covering themselves all over, they were speedily in the "land of nod."

Long and sound was that delicious sleep, the last that some of them were destined to enjoy; and longer it might have continued, for we were coming to long shots with the enemy's advancing *tirailleurs*, and had quite forgotten our guests in the hurry of our own affairs; but an immense clash of fixing bayonets suddenly roused them all at the same instant; when, conceiving that the enemy were upon them, they sprang nimbly up the rugged side of the mountain, to regain their respective posts.

The general order was, that the whole force should be under arms one hour before daybreak; but, to their confusion, it was now quite light, and the line was formed to receive the enemy.

It was in vain that the truants endeavoured to fall in unobserved: the practised eye of their commanding officer was upon them, and he ordered them to the front. I must here inform my gentle readers, that Colonel R—— was one of those rigid disciplinarians who are facetiously said to drill their troops on the graves of the enemy; and his rebuke on parade was infinitely more dreaded by his officers than the dangers of the field.

"So, gentlemen," he began with an ominous scowl, "this is pretty conduct in the face of an enemy! A nice example you set to the soldiers, of discipline and obedience! From Mr. Tyler and Mr. Ouseley, I couldn't, perhaps, expect much, as they are young and

foolish ! and Mr. Macpherson is a shatter-brained wild-goose : but for you, Captain Urquhart—an officer of some rank and standing in the army—there is no excuse. To quit your ranks, on any pretence whatever, when in front of the enemy, is downright desertion. You may now join your companies, gentlemen ; but rest assured that I shall forward charges against you immediately after the action.”

The culprits accordingly fell in, and soon forgot the colonel's threats in the excitement of the battle.

Meanwhile, we were sharply engaged with the enemy ; for, shrouded by the grey mist that still was lingering on the sierra, Ney, with three columns moved forward in front of the convent, to where our Light Division was posted, in advance of the British line. The brigade of General Simon led the attack ; and, reckless of the constant fusillade of our skirmishers, and the plunging fire of our artillery, which ploughed the advancing column from its leading section to its last, the enemy came steadily and quickly on, till their breathless *tirailleurs* reached the crest of our position. The British guns were then instantly retired, our skirmishers closed to their respective flanks, and in double quick time took up their post in line ; the French cheers arose, and in another second their column topped the height.

Then, if ever, was manifest the real superiority of British troops in close combat ; for Crawford, who was coolly watching the advance of the enemy, having given the word “Charge !” to his line, in a voice of thunder, we rushed forward with a cheer that pealed for miles over the sierra ; and, in the graphic language of Napier, “Eighteen hundred British bayonets went sparkling over the brow of the hill. The head of the French column was overwhelmed in an instant, and both its flanks were overlapped by the English wings,” while volley after volley, at close distance, completed its destruction ; and marked, with hundreds of its dead and dying, prostrate on the face of the sierra, the course of its murderous discomfiture.

The other two columns of Ney's attack, under Generals Regnier and Marchand, were equally unsuccessful against the other divisions of the allied army ; when, finding his efforts fruitless, and his troops sinking under an unprofitable slaughter, he withdrew them under cover of his artillery, and the roar of battle ceased.

I must now return to our visitors of the preceding evening, who had entirely forgotten their colonel's threatened vengeance, in the glory of crushing the French on the sierra, and the triumph of driving them down its rugged side in ruinous defeat and irretrievable confusion.

Colonel R——, however, did not forget the duty he had to perform towards the deserters. Immediately after the action, he was on his way to the division head-quarters, to report their conduct ; when he met Lieutenant Macpherson, all begrimed with dust, perspiration, and gunpowder.

“Well, sir !” exclaimed the colonel ; “I am going to acquaint Sir Thomas Picton with your conduct last night. Where are your companions ? Where is Captain Urquhart ?”

"He is killed, sir," answered Macpherson.

"Oh, indeed!" said the colonel with great *sang froid*. "Where is Lieutenant Ouseley?"

"He is also killed," was the reply.

"The devil he is!" exclaimed the colonel, in a tone of vexation, at the loss of another victim. "Where is Ensign Tyler, then?"

"He is mortally wounded, sir," said Macpherson, with his eyes brimful of tears.

"Confound it all!" said the colonel, as if everything had been done solely to thwart and torment him.

"Ah! yes," exclaimed Macpherson, with a heavy sigh; "poor fellows! They're all gone!"

"And a devilish lucky escape they have had, sir!" cried the colonel, with a frown, as he rode off grumbling at his disappointment.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GOLDEN VIRGIN.

THE result of this battle having defeated Massena's object of turning the British right, he changed his plan; and during the action detached a large body of cavalry, under the guidance of a Portuguese peasant, across the mountains towards Oporto, with the view of turning the left of the British position.

His intention being accurately divined by Lord Wellington, Colonel Trant was despatched to occupy the pass of Sardao, by which the French were to proceed; but, being misdirected in the road, he did not arrive there till they were in possession of the ground. Thus, after losing the battle of Busaco, Massena was enabled, by a Portuguese traitor, to push forward his whole army towards Coimbra, by the high road to Oporto.

This manœuvre, by which the position of the allies was turned, necessarily compelled Lord Wellington, though in possession of the field of battle, to fall back upon the reinforcements in his rear: orders were accordingly issued to abandon the sierra, and retire upon the lines of Torres Vedras. In doing this, his lordship was compelled, not only for the safety of the people themselves, but to deprive the enemy of all supplies, to order the inhabitants of Coimbra and the adjacent country to destroy everything they could not bring with them, and accompany the troops in their retreat. They accordingly followed, or preceded, the army on its march; abandoning their dwellings, driving off their cattle, burning or burying provisions and forage, leaving the town and villages deserted, and deprived of everything which could be serviceable to the invaders.

During this memorable retreat of an army and a nation, our regiment was much scattered; being apportioned, in independent companies, to bring up the rear of the heavy battalions, and prevent

stragglers from falling into the hands of the enemy. This was an arduous and harassing duty; for, exclusive of our military *protégés*, we had also to extend our assistance to the crowds of flying Portuguese who encumbered the flanks of our columns, all eager to reach the lines of Torres Vedras, behind which they felt assured of safety and protection.

To mend the matter, we were overwhelmed with a deluge of rain for several days, which cut up the roads dreadfully, and made our whipper-in duty more severe than ever; for we had not only to keep the stragglers up in front, but also to make head against the French light troops, who were now pressing pretty close upon our rear.

We at length reached Alenquer, about nine leagues from Lisbon; and, as this town, like all the rest, was deserted by its inhabitants, a scene of immense confusion took place amongst the stragglers, camp-followers, and habitual plunderers, always found in the wake of the best disciplined armies.

For three whole hours, amidst mud and rain, which was falling in torrents, we were incessantly employed in turning these wretches out of the houses; where they were grasping at everything they saw, and drinking everything in the shape of wines or spirits they could lay their hands on. No sooner was one house emptied than another would fill; and so on, from one end of the town to the other; gangs of men and women in a beastly state of intoxication, running up and down the lanes and alleys, as if playing at hide-and-seek with us, and utterly regardless of their own safety.

At last we succeeded in getting the great mass of them to the extremity of the town, and Dillon said to me,—

“Now, Percy, while I drive these devils on at the point of the bayonet, you just cover our retreat; for I hear the *parley-vous* hurraing not far off, and you’ll have to exchange shots with them, I’m thinking.”

I accordingly lingered with the last section some distance behind Dillon; but as the enemy made no appearance, I gave the word “forward!” which was gladly obeyed by my worn-out Light Bobs.

It was now the dusk of the evening, and the rain was beginning to abate a little; but the mud was knee-deep, and half savage with fatigue and hunger, I trudged on through it, some fifty or sixty paces in rear of the last section.

While labouring on in this manner, I heard some one in front singing to himself, in a sort of doleful attempt at cheerfulness, as well as I can recollect, the following curious stanza—

“Barney Bodkin broke his nose;
Want of money makes us sad;
Without feet we can’t have toes;
Crazy folks are always mad!”

“Surely this must be Conolly,” I said, as I came up with a soldier, who was staggering onwards, bent double with the united weight of musket and accoutrements, knapsack, blanket, mess-tin, havresack, and canteen; in addition to which, and above all, was strapped a huge

nondescript bundle, that might be taken for a human figure, if such a thing were at all likely.

"Faix, then, it's my own four bones, Master Percy," replied Conolly. "And it's tired enough I am of this day's journey, any how."

"No wonder," I said, with such a mountain of luggage as you have got upon your back. I hope you have not been plundering amongst those drunken scoundrels, Mr. Conolly.

"May be I have, and may be I haven't, sir," replied Conolly, with a very mysterious air.

"If you have," I said, excessively provoked, "I shall hand you over at once to the provost marshal, and have done with you."

"Naboclish!" exclaimed Conolly, in the same tone as before.

"You are running on destruction like an idiot," I said, "with your eyes open."

"Bathershin," said Conolly.

"You insolent dog!" I cried, for my temper had been sorely tried during the day, "if you give me any of your slang, I'll kick you into the mud."

"Then you wouldn't do that, Master Percy," replied Conolly, in humbler accents, "if you only knew what I have got upon my back."

"What have you got?" I demanded.

"I have got a vargin, sir," he replied.

"A virgin!" I exclaimed, "you don't mean to say you have got a woman on your back?"

"God forbid, sir!" replied Conolly, "'tis no woman, but a virgin, sir, barrin' she's alive in heavenly glory with the blessed saints and the Holy Saint Patrick at this present."

"What can you mean by this gibberish?" I demanded.

"I mane the blessed Vargin Mary herself, and devil a less," replied Conolly.

"Pshaw!" I exclaimed. "You are drunk, you sot!"

"Then sorrow a dhrop has passed my lips this blessed day, sir," replied Conolly, "but rain wather. Signs on id, whin all them other fools were hunting after wines and sperrits, in the houses beyant, I went to the ould ancient abbey church, that stands forinnt the market-place; and 'twas there, your honour, I got the lob."

"What lob?" I demanded.

"Why then," said Conolly, "to tell God's truth, I was looking out for some of them goold and silver cups, that your honour was afther drinking out of at the French cavalry mess; when at last, and long run, after rummaging up and down amongst nooks and crannies, that were full of ghosts, if I could only see 'em, I kem to a dark-looking hole under a staircase; and may I never die a sinner, but 'twas there I found it!"

"Found what?" I asked.

"A goolden vargin!" replied Conolly, "lying there amongst a hape of goolden saints, and angels, and doves, and lambs, wid the fine ould ancient cobwebs hanging about 'em, your honour; but, as she was the freshest, I brought her away first."

"Stuff and nonsense!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, be the blessed cross!" said Conolly, "I'm not tellin' your honour a word of a lie. From the tip of her wings, to the ball of her great toe, she's one solid lump of pure goold; that will be the makin' of us all, every mother's sowl, in the Light Brigade."

"Oh!" I said, "if that's your prize, Conolly, I wish you joy of it; but step out, for I shall want a dry change of everything."

"Yis, sir," said Conolly, with a grunt, as he laboured on under his burthen.

"And, Conolly," I said, "bring your virgin to the bivouac-fire. Unless I greatly mistake, we shall find some use for her there."

"Yis, sir," said Conolly.

We soonafter arrived at our ground for the night; and being relieved by a fresh party of the 95th, who took all the outpost duty, I hastened to our company's fire, which was blazing up cheerfully; while Dillon and my two brother subalterns were roasting their shins, and taking a drop of comfort before supper.

The rain had now entirely ceased, the moon shone out brightly, and the ground all round the fire was drying very fast; so were also the men's clothes, great coats, and blankets, which, having been thoroughly saturated during the day's march, were now sending upwards a vapoury column of steam. Seated each upon a knapsack, we looked on with great complacency, while one of our mess cooks was frying pork-chops, mutton-chops, beef-steaks, and sausages before us; the hissing, sputtering, and savoury odour of which equally gratified the olfactories and stimulated the appetites of all.

At this interesting moment came up Mr. Conolly, sinking with fatigue under his unconscionable load. Having relieved him from his "Vargin," which I laid with all due decorum on the ground before Dillon, enveloped as it was in a green serge window-blind, I desired Mr. Conolly to tell his own story.

This he did with many circumlocutions, and the addition of many marvellous accessories, such as flying angels flapping their wings while he brought it away from its hiding place; and a fine ould saint, that he took for St. Patrick, giving him his blessing, and foretelling great luck to him and his ancestors to the end of the world.

I then withdrew the covering, and displayed a very golden-looking figure of St. Michael, the size of life, to the wondering eyes of the whole company, who had listened in crowds to Conolly's tale, and the great mass of whom actually believed the image to be gold; even Dillon himself looked more than half convinced of the agreeable and astounding fact.

"Now, Conolly," I said, "you don't, of course, mean to keep all this lob of gold to yourself?"

"Not by no manner of means, sir," replied Conolly. "I never was a greedy-gut, thank goodness and the blessed Vargin!"

"Let me know, therefore," I continued, "how you wish it to be divided."

"Well, sir," replied Conolly, "I wish to give one half to you and

the captain, another half to myself, and a third half to the rest of the company."

This generous decision was received with plaudits. A pioneer was speedily found, who as speedily sawed the Virgin Mary into *three halves*, which were instantly pronounced, with a groan of disappointment, succeeded by a general burst of laughter, to be very fair specimens of the cork-tree!

"Agh, sweet Vargin," cried Conolly, "'tis ould Nick that's always playing me them tricks; jest the same as when he turned a dozen fresh eggs into a fiery serpent, and then into a batch of chickens, in the island of Walchereen."

"I have a muckle suspesicion, on the contraire," said the provost marshal, who just then came up to see what the matter was; "I have a muckle suspesicion, Conolly, that 'tis a second edeetion of the cuckoo clock, mon."

This created an immense laugh at the expense of poor Conolly, who fled and hid himself in dismay and mortification. The blessed Vargin being pitched into the fire, very much increased the volume thereof; while we ate an excellent supper, and imbibed a reasonable quantity of cognac, adultrified, as Dillon said, with water.

We then lay down upon the sod, gazing on the chaste, cold moon, with our feet in the ashes, and looking very much like weary soldiers taking our rest,—

"With our martial cloaks around us."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SAVING THE COLOURS.

THE proclamations which had been issued, requiring the inhabitants to abandon their homes, as we fell back upon Torres Vedras, were so generally attended to, that crowds of men, women, and children, the sick, the aged, and the infirm, covered the roads and fields in every direction. Mothers might be seen with infants at their breasts, hurrying towards the capital; old men, scarcely able to totter along, made progress, chiefly by the aid of their children; whilst the whole wayside soon became strewed with bedding, blankets, and other household furniture, which the weary fugitives were unable to carry any farther. Troops of all arms, attended by numerous army followers; peasantry with their families; the higher orders of society travelling conformably to their rank; furniture, grain, and the cattle of an extensive line of country, all combined, pressed forward in one varied, confused, and apparently interminable mass.

By the rigid enforcement of this system during the retreat from Busaco, so well planned and so ably executed, the whole population of this extensive district found safety and shelter in and about Lisbon; and the allied forces took up their position without the loss of a straggler, or a baggage-waggon; in those famous lines, before

whose impregnable front even Massena himself recoiled in astonishment, though but a week before he had boasted that in a few days he would "drown the leopard." Indeed, so confident were the French of the speedy termination of the campaign, that numerous engagements were made amongst them for parties to be given in Lisbon; which, however, none of them were even again destined to see, except as hospital patients or prisoners of war.

Towards the conclusion of the retreat, however, the movements of the troops were sadly impeded by the panic-struck inhabitants of Coimbra, who had so long delayed their flight towards Lisbon, that the roads were at last literally blocked up with carts, waggons, mules, horses, bullocks, and human beings; all striving to be first in some place of safety, from the dreaded French, who were now in close pursuit.

In the midst of this terrible confusion, Colonel M——'s regiment, to which Dillon's company was attached, became accidentally separated from the brigade to which it belonged; and was even, as the colonel thought, in some danger of being cut off by the enemy. In this predicament, his first idea was the disgrace that must attach to the regiment if the colours were taken; the preservation of these cherished symbols being, as my fair readers doubtless know, an especial point of honour in the military breast.

To prevent so fatal a disaster, the colonel one evening assembled a council of war, at which he stated his apprehension; requesting his officers to deliberate maturely on the subject, and to give him their opinions on the following morning, as to the best mode of disposing of these darling objects.

Accordingly, when the council reassembled at daybreak the following morning, previous to commencing the day's march, many suggestions were offered with the view of saving the colours: one officer, amongst others, hinting that they might be taken off the staffs, and concealed under the clothing of the colour-sergeants; but this was objected to as peculiarly liable to discovery.

A young ensign, who had recently joined from Sandhurst, then said he recollected having read of a similar circumstance, at the battle of Sempach, where the Austrians were defeated by the Swiss; where one Nicholas Dut, or Dot, a gallant mountaineer, who bore the colours of his canton, finding himself surrounded by the enemy, tore the colours in pieces and crammed them into his capacious mouth, where they were found after his death, and carried back in triumph to the Town House. Some such expedient as this, he modestly suggested, might be adopted; but, as our English colours were generally of enormous dimensions, too great, indeed, for any one mortal mouth to contain, they might, when torn to pieces, be distributed amongst those supernumerary and staff officers who had no occasion to open their mouths at all during the action.

Every one acknowledged that the expedient was an ingenious one, and worthy of consideration; but the officers in general seemed to be of opinion that, if the regiment was actually cut off by the enemy, it would be of little use to save the colours.

Colonel M—, who had listened to the discussion with an air of profound mystery, now exclaimed, with a look of unbounded self-satisfaction,—

“That may be your opinion, gentlemen; but I am happy to inform you that I have put our colours completely out of the reach of the enemy.”

“You have, sir!” was the general exclamation.

“Yes, gentlemen,” cried the colonel; “I flatter myself that I have effectually saved our honour from this indelible stain.”

“But how, sir? How?” demanded several voices.

“Last night, gentlemen,” replied the colonel, in a tone of triumph, “while you were vainly ruminating on the best method of saving our beloved colours, I—burnt them to ashes with my own hands!”

The gallant colonel’s regiment was not, however, cut off, as he had anticipated; but great was the surprise on seeing it march into the alignment under bare poles, without a single rag of silk attached to them. So novel a circumstance occasioned an immediate inquiry; and long and loud was the merriment of the troops, when the real cause was discovered. Lord Wellington saw, at a glance, how the case stood, and very considerably gave the colonel leave of absence to go home on his private affairs; but, being an old officer, and a worthy, well-intentioned man, the next brevet fortunately qualified him for the command at Albany barracks, where I met him again at a subsequent period of my career.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TORRES VEDRAS.

SINGULAR enough, after so many hairbreadth escapes in this harassing retreat, the very last shot fired by the *tirailleurs* of Massena’s advance, as we retired into the lines, with our faces to the foe, did my business. I was standing in rather a prominent position, whistling the men to close to the centre, when I felt a sudden wrench in my right leg, and fell to the ground, frothing at the mouth, and calling lustily for water.

Four of the men rushed to the spot where I lay; a blanket was unfolded, and I was laid gently upon it: the men then lifting it by the corners, marched steadily along with me to the rear; a fifth man giving me, from time to time, a draught of nectar, for so I deemed the dirty water out of his canteen.

Colonel Colborne hastily ran up, and inquired kindly after my wound; but I was suffering too much agony to reply. Soon after, there was a clattering of horses’ feet; and a well-known voice exclaimed,—

“One of your officers, Colborne?”

“Yes, my lord,” was the reply, “and a very promising one; young Blake, a mere stripling.”

"Is he badly hurt?" was the second question.

"I can't well say, my lord," replied the colonel, in a doubtful voice; "a rifle-ball above the right knee."

"If the cap is not touched," said his lordship as he rode off, "he'll save his leg."

With instinctive confidence in the soundness of that judgment which so rarely erred, I stretched my hand down and examined,—

"Thank heaven! my knee-pan is unhurt."

The agony I felt, however, was so excessive, and I writhed and made so many ugly faces, that one of the men took a cartridge from his pouch, bit off the ball, thrust it into my mouth, and bid me chew it like a quid of tobacco.

I did so, and soon reduced it to shreds, feeling, certainly, much comfort, either real or imaginary, from the operation.

Slowly and carefully I was carried through those famous lines, upon which the modern Fabius had bestowed so much time and thought, as the only means of averting the entire conquest of the Peninsula. I shall not, however, attempt a description of them from any observations I may have made in my progress, from where I received my wound to the village of Santa Clara, about a mile and a half distant, where the general hospital of the division was situated. Indeed, I slept, or rather slumbered, unquietly the greater part of the way, in spite of my sufferings, and did not wake to a full consciousness of my situation till effectually roused by an acute and racking pain, which seemed to tear my heart from my body.

Looking wildly around, I found myself lying on a stretcher in a lofty and elegant apartment, being held down by several hospital attendants, while our regimental surgeon, with probes, forceps, tourniquets, and other diabolical implements, was endeavouring to extract the ball from the huge mass of inflamed and highly discoloured flesh and muscle in which it was embedded.

This operation having been at length happily performed, and the customary dressings and bandages applied, an anodyne was administered to me by the doctor, with the aid of which I at length succeeded in falling asleep; though the operation of probing, and cutting, and dragging at my unfortunate limb seemed to be still going on. After a long though feverish slumber, I awoke somewhat easier; and, looking round, contemplated the scene of suffering of which I formed a part.

The room in which I lay was, as I have said, lofty and elegant, the gilded cornices and crimson velvet window-curtains denoting a structure of more than ordinary pretension.

The walls were divided into compartments, which, as well as the ceiling, were beautifully painted—but all with the most rigidly scriptural subjects, miracles, conceptions, crucifixions, and apotheoses of saints and saintesses, with the usual accompaniments of cherubim and seraphim, and winged angels, whose beauty might almost indicate them as pertaining to the decorations of the Paphian bower rather than a Christian temple.

Among this last class of subjects there was one that singularly affected

me. It was the apotheosis of a female saint of the most surpassing loveliness, whose name I could not learn, for the hospital attendants gazed upon all these miracles of art with apathetic wonder, and utter ignorance of the meaning of everything but the crucifixion, of which they had some vague idea. Vexed at their stupid answers to my repeated questions I turned away from them, and fixed my eyes upon this beau-ideal of feminine grace and celestial beauty, till I became as great a fool as that Spaniard who fell madly in love with a naked Magdalene in St. Peter's, which induced the Pope to give the lady a bronze petticoat.

But there were other subjects to excite my sympathy besides these inspired productions of the pencil—these were fifty or sixty of my poor brother soldiers, ranged along the gorgeous walls on coarse wooden bedsteads, and suffering from recent casualties: some with amputated legs and arms, or wounds more desperate than mine, which elicited a succession of groans, moans, and occasionally wild shrieks of excruciating torture, as the knife was plunged into their quivering flesh, or the saw grated against their fractured bones.

To relieve myself from the painful feelings excited by such a variety of human suffering, which I could in no way alleviate, I always had recourse to the angelic countenance of my adorable saint, till I almost longed at last for that peace which the world cannot give, and which is nowhere to be found but in those blest regions beyond the skies—as indicated in a scroll at the top of the painting, which bore in gilt letters the appropriate motto, "*in cælo quies.*"

While plunged one day in one of these reveries, I had a visit from Jack Dillon, with whom, as usual, I had an amusing gossip.

"But what of these celebrated lines," I demanded, "that people make such a fuss about?"

"Oh, trumpery Moses! but they're the quarest jigamarees you ever saw in your life," replied Dillon. "Only fancy Lord Wellington taking a baron of beef and carving it in a thousand odd ways after his own janius. 'Tis for all the world just like that; such pollyollygrams, roundabout romboys, and 'tangular three squares, you never saw in your life."

"But there must be some design about them," I observed.

"Not a bit," replied Dillon, "any more than about the Bog of Allen. In one place there's a ditch running up a hill; in another, a battery down in a valley; then old roads are broken up, and new ones made—like the industrious woman that cut a piece off one end of her blanket, and sewed it on the other, that she might be doing something; then water is stopped in one place, and let run in another; here's a bridge without a river—there a river without a bridge; with lakes, and sluices, and gulfs, and gullies, till, at last, a fellow doesn't know whether he's walking upon land or water."

"How are you off for quarters?" I asked.

"Is it quarters?" cried Dillon. "There's only six in the whole country, and they're divided among forty generals, English and Portuguese. Why, man, we all live in batteries, ride-outs, horn-works, and half-moons; and you'd laugh to see the huts some of 'em

have. The colonel has one that you couldn't swing a cat in; and the major, who they say is a Hampshire squire, with three thousand a-year, lives in an oven. One has a water-butt for his palace, another a mait-safe—for my part I live nowhere at all, but roam from one bivouac to another, taking a bit here and a sup there; and giving 'em all a go at my larder in turn, when the paymaster books up, which is 'like an angel's visit, seldom or never,' as Lord Byron says."

"Is duty pretty sharp?" I asked.

"Oh, as tight as a drum," replied Dillon. "We drill, as usual, on the graves of the enemy; then Lord Wellington is always flying about, and grabbing at every fellow he meets. 'Twas only yesterday I took a race up a hill to get out of his way, when he shouted after me, 'Hollo, you sir!' I think he might be more civil to a gentleman's son, and a captain in the army to boot, that the king calls esquire. So when I came down, he said, 'Where were you going to, sir?' 'To the top of the hill, my lord,' I replied, 'just to take a view.' 'Don't you know that hill is all mined, sir?' said he, 'for artillery practice, and you might have been blown to the devil in three minutes,' and off he galloped. Between you and I, Percy, I think his lordship's conduct is rather superfleuous of late, and if there was such a thing as calling out a commander-in-chief—oh, trumpery Moses!—but Jack Dillon from Navan's the boy to make him smell powder."

"But, Jack," I said, "what part of the lines am I now in? What building is this?"

"You are now," he replied, "about the middle of the first range of batteries, and this is the convent of Santa Clara, with a village to the tail of it of the same name."

"And have we turned this beautiful building into an hospital?" I demanded.

"The nuns, bless the sweet cratures," replied Dillon, "gave up one half of it for the sick and wounded, and are all huddled together, to the number of two or three hundred, in another half; what they have done with the third half I don't exactly know."

"It has three halves, then?" said I, smiling in Dillon's face.

"To be sure," he replied, with all possible gravity. "A middle, and two side wings—isn't that three?"

"It appears to be a wealthy establishment," I observed.

"Oh, there isn't a richer from this to Skibbereen," replied Dillon. "Sure, 'tis what they call a royal foundation; though myself doesn't know why all the honour should be paid to the foundation, and none to the top of the building."

"That was an oversight of the architect," I said.

"May be so," said Dillon; "but here you are, anyhow, in the *refractory*—a sort of mess-room—where the nuns and the ould mother abbess take their mails; and the best of good living they have too, and the richest of wines, for they're all noblemen and gentlemen, or *high dolgos*, as they call themselves in this country."

"The sisters and daughters of noblemen and gentlemen, you mean," I observed.

"Of coorse," replied Dillon. "Sure, doesn't every fool know what the sect of a nun is; though I shouldn't like to swear to them all, for a few that I have seen sport mighty purty mustachios under their noses."

"Where have you seen them?" I asked. "Do they show themselves occasionally?"

"I have seen them in the other wards," replied Dillon, "giving physic and advice to some of our men that are down again with that Walcheren ague, bad luck to it. Have you not had any of them here yet?"

"No," I replied, "I have seen nothing here in the shape of a petticoat."

"Then you soon will, I have no doubt," returned Dillon; "though they are not so well up to gunshot wounds as to fevers and agues. But, oh, trumpery Moses! there's Doctor White looking as black as thunder for making you laugh so, and I must run off, or he'll stick his *turncoat* into me."

"So then," I soliloquized after Dillon's departure, "yon picture is the apotheosis of Santa Clara, the foundress of this noble institution. She might have founded a new religion instead of a convent, with that noble face of hers, and I would have been the most ardent of her worshippers."

In the midst of my enthusiasm I fell asleep, and dreamt of saints and angels, and greasy friars, and nuns with mustachios under their noses.

In a few days more I began to feel somewhat more comfortable. I had Conolly domiciled in the building with me; and his assiduity and attention, as in the case of the Walcheren fever, very much facilitated my recovery.

Meanwhile I had learned from several sources the present position of the two armies with reference to each other, of which, for obvious reasons, I had been for some time ignorant.

The French having thus far successfully pursued us, imagined we were going to embark at once, as Sir John Moore did at Corunna; and that they would have nothing else to do than to take quiet possession of Lisbon, or perhaps crush us by their superior force in the hurry of our departure. But they found that our position was impregnable; and that, while the united armies of Great Britain and Portugal were abundantly supplied with provisions from England, the Brazils, Africa and America, they themselves were solely dependent on the ground they occupied for subsistence.

How little, therefore, they had to depend upon will be apparent from the fact before stated, that the entire population of the valley of the Mondego had accompanied us on our march—simultaneously destroying their own means of subsistence to put them out of their enemy's reach. Of these voluntary exiles fifty thousand were encamped in rear of our lines, and in the streets and squares of Lisbon, their wants being supplied by liberal alms, and by the benevolence of several convents, especially the wealthy one of Santa Clara.

Every day now added to the distress of Massena's "invincible

army of Portugal," which in its progress to Torres Vedras had not found sufficient for a single day's ration in the whole country. They were, consequently, obliged to subsist on their own scanty resources, and chance discoveries of buried provisions; for all supplies from the rear were intercepted by the flying bands of Portuguese troops, under Generals Silveira and Bacellar, and Colonels Trant, Miller, Wilson, &c.

One good result, however, of that kind of tacit convention which usually exists between regular armies, and of which several instances had already occurred during the war, was, that the French and English advanced posts had ceased to worry each other with fruitless attacks and surprises; and that the sentries and videttes had even discontinued firing on each other. I remarked accordingly, that our surgery cases were now few and far between, and that a great diminution of personal suffering was the happy result.

CHAPTER XL.

THE NOVICE OF SANTA CLARA.

As I lay, restlessly tossing about on my bed, one day, I heard a rustling sound approaching the doorway, and I strained my eyes towards the entrance: but my eyesight had become weak from loss of blood, and I could only distinguish two female figures, one of whom looked rather old, and the other somewhat younger.

They were, indeed, altogether dissimilar in years and appearance. The elder was tall, spare, and raw-boned, with the ordinary costume of black serge and a long coarse white veil; which, though particularly clean and neat, covered, I should say, a moustache of some pretension. The younger sister was of that medium size which is neither too short nor too tall; but her figure was full, plump, and exquisitely moulded. Her dress consisted of the conventual habit, without ornament; but it was composed of the richest materials, being, in fact, a splendid black Genoa velvet. She wore no veil, not being yet professed: but a fillet of snow-white linen bound her noble forehead, and concealed her hair; while a mantilla thrown over her head fell in graceful folds upon her fair, well-rounded shoulders.

They stopped at several of the beds in their mission of charity; bestowing upon each of the patients, amidst a great deal of ghostly advice, some little articles of luxury or comfort, which I could perceive were gratefully accepted. For this purpose, the elder nun carried a basket, apparently well stored with the luscious fruits of the country and the season; as well as confectionary, cakes, and preserves, in the manufacture of which the holy sisters are known to excel, as they do in the production of artificial flowers, and every other description of fancy work.

At length they drew nigh to where I lay; but, oh, heavens! what

was my astonishment—my delight—when, in the younger of the two, I beheld the very image of the saint I now worshipped—the bea-tified creature so beautifully painted in the picture before me!

Unable to control my emotions, I uttered a cry which I intended for one of joy, but which must have sounded like one of pain; for she drew close to my bedside, and exclaimed, in the most musical voice I ever heard:

“Deh! poverino! mi fa pietá!”

“Heavens!” I exclaimed, “that is neither the squeaking Portuguese, nor the sonorous Castilian. It must, of course, be Italian.”

“Sì, signore,” she replied, “il vero Toscano; the language of my dear, dear mother.”

“And yonder is your mother herself,” I exclaimed, extending my arm towards the picture of Santa Clara.

“Yes,” she replied, with an angelic smile, which rendered the resemblance more striking. “My mother sat for that picture to a pupil of Murillo’s, a great many years ago.”

“And your father, I demanded, “what was he?”

“A Portuguese nobleman,” she replied, “Dom Tomão Pereira y Souza.”

“But how comes it then,” I asked, “that you are a nun?”

“I am as yet only in my novitiate,” she replied.

“But you surely never will take the veil,” I eagerly exclaimed.

“Why not, señor?” she demanded, with affecting simplicity.

“Do you think me unworthy to be the bride of heaven?”

“On the contrary,” I cried, “if there were ten millions of heavens you are worth them all.”

She blushed and smiled; offered me some delicious confectionary, and was about to pass on, but I madly grasped her hand and cried:

“Oh! come and see me once again.”

She said it was her intention to do so.

“And if you wish me ever to rise from this bed of sickness,” I exclaimed, “teach me, oh, teach me, that delicious language of your dear, dear mother’s: from your sweet lips I know I should speedily learn it. But when will you come again?”

The young novice addressed a few words in Portuguese to Sister Teresa, her attendant, or *duenna* as she seemed to be, and then smilingly replied:

“Forse, forse domani.”

“Good heaven! what does she say?” I cried, as she glided on to dispense her charities to other patients. “‘Forse, forse, domani!’ What can it mean? Would to heaven I had never learned anything but Italian. That sweet, soft, bastard Latin is worth all languages that ever were spoken, living or dead. Conolly!” I shouted.

“Here, sir,” replied Conolly, with military precision.

“Hire a horse,” I said; “stay, can you ride?”

“No, sir,” replied Conolly, “except in a cart.”

“Then take a cart,” I said, “or a carriage—any description of vehicle you can first lay your hand on: fly down to Lisbon and get me an Italian dictionary.”

"What's that, sir?" demanded Conolly; "is it anything in the sausage way?"

"Fool!" I exclaimed, "'tis a book—'forse, forse, domani!' I shall forget the words—give me pen and ink, and I'll write it down for you—there—an Italian dictionary, at some English bookseller's—there are several in Lisbon—fly! not a word—'forse, forse, domani!'"

Conolly set off, firmly convinced his master was mad: but, with a degree of shrewdness that often surprised me in such an ignoramus, he accomplished his mission, and returned with the book in four or five hours; during which little eternity, I went almost distracted with the repetition of—"forse, forse, domani!"

I snatched the book, opened it, and soon found the words; "forse," *perhaps*, "domani," *to-morrow*.

"Eureka! Eureka!" I exclaimed, "I have found it: to-morrow! to-morrow! White, my dear fellow, give me an opiate for a dozen; I want to sleep twenty hours at the least."

The doctor, who had been attracted by my exclamations, approached; felt my pulse, gave me what I wanted, and I was soon asleep.

The following morning I shaved, made myself smart, and waited impatiently for the nuns' visiting hour. It came at length; and my heart throbbed violently as the fair vision approached with her customary companion. They both sat down by my bedside, and with a look of triumph I exhibited my dictionary, begging at the same time to be indulged with the name of my fair visitant.

It was Juliana! There was melody in the sound. I soon learned, also, that her father and mother were both dead; and that her father's wealth having gone, as a matter of course, with the title to her brother, she, according to the custom too prevalent in the Peninsula, had embraced the resolution of devoting herself to heaven, rather than bestow a portionless hand on some person who might be unable to appreciate its value.

Juliana at length acceded to my repeated request, and gave me a lesson in Italian. Oh! that first delightful lesson! never will it be eradicated from the heart on which it was so indelibly impressed! She came again the following day, and the day after, and for a whole week in succession; imparting her instructions with such sweetness and intelligence, that I began to make a rapid progress; while patient Sister Teresa sat quietly by, evidently the obsequious attendant of one whose rank and family influence would, in all probability, speedily place her at the head of the institution.

No poor scholar, struggling for college honours, ever worked harder than I did, to acquire the power of communicating my ideas in Italian. I read and wrote it incessantly, translating it backwards and forwards, and committing whole cantos of Tasso to memory. Goldoni I found too easy, and Dante by no means too crabbed. In short, my cure and my studies made equal progress: my wound was healed, my limb as strong as ever; my pronunciation, Juliana said, rivalled the "Bocca Romana;" but my heart was irretrievably lost.

I believe poor Juliana made a similar discovery with respect to herself, about the same time; for she became pensive, abstracted, and melancholy: her lovely eyes frequently filled with tears, and her bosom heaved with sighs, which she could neither control nor account for.

For my part, the most strangely romantic schemes and speculations occupied my mind. I was for flying with her to the wilds of America—to the boundless prairies—to the interminable lakes;—there, with my Juliana, like another Manco Capac, to introduce civilization and religion amongst the savage Choctaws, Ootawas, and Micmacs; and to become to them deities, as it were, whose worship should descend to their grateful posterity in traditional songs, from age to age, to the end of time.

But still I held it atrocious to seduce and run away with the bride of heaven. I who used to pride myself, in my young days, on being a good Catholic; for I could make the sign of the cross with the most accurate adherence to the cardinal points of the forehead, the shoulders, and the stomach; though why the latter unworthy member should be included in the sacred formula, I never could understand, unless it had some mystical reference to transubstantiation. Then I could repeat the Lord's prayer, the Belief, the invocation to the Virgin, in Latin, with tolerable precision; though a false quantity, an *i brevis* or *longa* misapplied would occasionally steal in, owing to my defective education.

Amidst all these "thick coming fancies," I was lost in a sea of doubt and perplexity, my mind absolutely verging on distraction.

At last, one day—one eventful day—I had the ward entirely to myself; for the few patients who still remained were out in their flannel gowns, enjoying the sunshine in the splendid gardens of the convent. I was walking up and down, revolving matter deep and dangerous in my agitated thoughts, when Juliana and her duenna arrived.

With a sudden thought, inspired by some supernal power, desirous of my happiness or destruction, I put a gold cruzado into the hands of the duenna, whose love of money I had long observed, and requested she would do me the favour to dispense it in charity amongst the numerous beggars who daily flocked round the convent gates. With much alacrity she hastened to accomplish her mission; and the moment I was alone with Juliana, I threw myself on my knees at her feet, made a passionate declaration of love, in that sweet Italian she had taught me, and implored her to crown my bliss, by abandoning her cruel intention of taking the veil, and by becoming my bride.

She was confused, silent, overwhelmed with intense emotion; till, encouraged by her manner, I sprang up and folded her in my arms. She yielded to my embrace, and kissed me passionately; then, tearing herself from my arms, she fell upon her knees before her mother's picture; raised her clasped hands and streaming eyes to heaven, and wept and prayed fervently till the return of her duenna, who was highly edified to find her in so devout an attitude.

But the ice was broken—the citadel was won—heaven no longer

occupied the thoughts of Juliana, to the exclusion of all mundane wishes and desires. We soon discovered a mode of correspondence, and a means of obtaining secret interviews. She slept in one of the cells of the ground-floor cloister, the small grated window of which opened on a large space of uncultivated ground, fruitful only in rocks, whin bushes, and the gum-cistus plant. Every night, like a skilful engineer, I made my approaches to the convent in this direction, till I arrived at the edge of a deep wide fosse, which defended the sacred edifice all round from the approach of profane footsteps.

Having thus arrived, as it were, on the crest of the glacis, if I saw a light in Juliana's cell, I threw some small gravel at the casement; if the light disappeared, it was a proof that she could meet me in the garden; if not, it showed that this would be inconvenient. In the former case, I ran along by the garden wall, till I arrived beneath a lofty fig-tree, whose branches projected far beyond it. Then, taking from a hole, which I had cunningly wrought in the side of the fosse, a rope prepared for the purpose, I threw one end over the thickest branch, and thus swung myself up to the top of the wall, from whence the descent was easy enough into the garden.

In this manner we enjoyed many stolen interviews; the result of which was, that Juliana consented to elope with me, and accompany me to England, it being impossible for her to remain in Portugal after such a step. I therefore set about getting a medical certificate, for which purpose I literally starved myself for a week, that I might appear suffering and sickly. Dr. White being my friend, I soon accomplished my object, which, indeed, was not very difficult just then, as no movements of any consequence were anticipated during the winter.

With inexpressible delight I announced my success to Juliana, and started for Lisbon to procure a passage to England. In this, also, fortune seemed to favour my wishes, the *Fanny*, of London, being advertised to sail with the tide on the following morning. I took and paid for our passage, marked our berths, and made every other arrangement necessary to render this first important step in life pleasant and prosperous to my beloved.

CHAPTER XLI.

EL GRAN LOR.

DELIGHTED as I was at having thus successfully transacted my business at Lisbon, and secured a passage for Juliana and myself; but, above all, half delirious at the near approach of my happiness, when I should be able to release my beloved mistress from the odious trammels of that bigotry, which was about to sacrifice her youth and beauty for the gratification of inordinate and heartless ambition, I

walked, as it were, upon air—I almost flew that I might reach Santa Clara in time to prepare for instant flight, before some unlucky turn of destiny should blast our felicity.

But the more haste the worse speed; especially in the streets of Lisbon, which were at that time the filthiest in the world, except those of Corfu, as they were some twenty years back. No one, in fact, could venture, with any degree of safety, to walk those infernal streets without the utmost circumspection; so encumbered as they were with dunghills, dead dogs and cats, and streams of horrible filth; all duly left there, accumulating hourly, to be swept off by the next deluge of rain into the Tagus.

I was well aware, as indeed every one with a nose must necessarily be, of this national peculiarity; but, eager to communicate my happiness to the expecting Juliana, I, in an evil hour, attempted to make a short cut across the widest street in the city, where, alas! there was no crossing; and, in the very first step, sank to my knee in a horrible mess, which emitted an odour that must have poisoned the atmosphere for miles around. In a desperate effort to release myself from this beau trap, I made another plunge, and with an equal result, for now neither of my legs could laugh at the other.

The case being hopeless, I waded over as I best could; and when I did really get on something like terra firma, I began furiously to stamp off the mud and filth, swearing like a Bedlamite as I did so, while a bevy of the “soft señoras,” in an opposite balcony, absolutely screamed with laughter at my predicament.

Mortified as I felt at this explosion of merriment, it was heaven itself compared to what I experienced when the clattering of horses’ feet struck my ears, and I saw at a distance no less a personage than the commander-in-chief, dashing along the street helter-skelter, towards the spot where I stood, with a score of staff officers and orderly dragoons at his heels.

To meet his eagle eye in the horrible pickle in which I was, I felt to be quite impossible; besides, I had my misgivings that he might put a stop to my matrimonial excursion. Without waiting, therefore, to argue the matter at much length, I bolted down a narrow lane that stood nigh, with the fairest possible hopes of escape; when, just as his lordship arrived at the end of the lane I had quitted, my evil genius threw an obstacle in my way.

This was a small country horse, laden with a huge pair of panniers, filled with fruit and vegetables, that was tied at a doorway, and stood in the most unaccommodating manner right across the lane, which he entirely occupied. To stop and give myself up to the laughter of the whole party was distraction; nothing but escape could save me from mortification, and perhaps worse. Without a moment’s hesitation, therefore, I increased my speed, made a spring, and cleared the obstacle at a flying leap: then, pursuing my course, I was about to issue from the lane at the other end, when a puppy of an aide-de-camp, who had cut off my retreat by one of the lateral communications, galloped at me, exclaiming:—

“Hark to Reynard! wind him and cross him! Walk back, sir,

if you please ; his lordship wishes to have a little familiar chat with you."

Silent and sad I marched back to where El Gran Lor, with all his attendants, was now waiting my approach.

"Your name and regiment, sir?" were the first words that saluted my ear.

"Blake, my lord, of the 52nd," I replied.

"Blake!" he repeated. "Oh, true; you were hurt in the knee, I think, some weeks since?"

"Yes, my lord," I replied.

"Where were you going to in such a hurry, sir?" he sternly demanded.

"To England, my lord," was my confused answer.

"With despatches, I presume, to judge from your agility," he was pleased to observe, with one of those smiles that were so rare on his countenance, though so becoming.

"I'm going home, my lord," I said, "on sick leave."

"Sick leave!" he repeated with an ominous frown; "nonsense, sir! Join your regiment without delay. A man who can jump over a horse may do very well for Astley's, but he certainly is not fit for the hospital."

And off he galloped with his escort; flinging a shower of mud from the horses' heels that very much added to my unsavoury condition.

"Thus vanish all my hopes of happiness!" I exclaimed, folding my hands, and looking the very picture of despair. "Thus, my poor Juliana, all our visions of bliss are scattered to the —"

"Mr. Blake," shouted an aide-de-camp, dashing up to my side, before I was aware of his approach. "You are to proceed to the head-quarters of your regiment, immediately, and report yourself for outlying picket to-night." Then, leaning over his saddle-bow, he proceeded, in a more familiar strain:—

"Percy, my boy, there will be wigs on the green, before long."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed; "William Galway, my old school-fellow!"

"The same," he replied, grasping me warmly by the hand.

"But, how—how?" I stammered.

"I can't stop now to tell you how," he replied, smiling; "but, as you may perceive, I'm roughing it on the extra staff. I'll come and see you to-night, at your bivouac, and we'll have a talk of old times. Never think of going home now, man, with all your luck before you. You have the proverb in your favour, Percy, but rather too much of it at present."

And off he set, with a shout of laughter that disturbed the siesta of the whole locality.

With a heavy heart, I plodded back to Santa Clara on foot; for I couldn't think of intruding, in my present condition, on the very flashy company that generally filled the vehicles plying between the lines and Lisbon. I arrived at head-quarters just in time to change my dress, and report myself ready for duty to Colonel Colborne;

who, though surprised at my sudden change of plan, was very glad to see me back again, as he was getting slack of duty officers, from a variety of casualties.

Dillon just then came into the colonel's hut for orders, being about to start for the outposts with his company; and very glad he was to find I was going with him, instead of to England. In a few minutes more, we marched; and after a long detour we arrived at the extreme advance, where we relieved a picket of the 95th.

"Those French fellows," said Middleton, of the Rifles, "are too civil by half to-night: they have been chatting and laughing with our sentries, and treating them to cognac and aguardiente. Besides, see what a lot of fires they're getting up all along their lines. There's something in the wind, depend upon it, so look out, Dillon; you haven't old Spry to deal with here."

"Depend upon it," replied Jack, "I'll not turn out with the poker to the tooraloos. Good-night, old fellow!"

"Good-night! good-night!" said the Rifles, as they marched out of the trenches.

"Now, Percy," said Dillon, "just cock your chin over that sand-bag, and keep a sharp look-out, while I smoke a dhudheen in paice and quietness. Have you anything in the canteen, alanuv? The nights are getting bitther cowl, though the fools in Ireland tould me the sun was always shining in Portiugal, day and night. I wondher if it ever does in any part of the world, Percy."

I handed Dillon my canteen, replenished with cognac, and assured him for his comfort that if he was ever lucky enough to get to Spitsbergen—

"Where in the world is Spitvirgin?" demanded Dillon.

"'Tis next door to the North Pole," I replied; "but if you ever get there, Jack, you'll see the sun going round the horizon—"

"The horizon!" interrupted Dillon; "is that one of the mountains, Percy?"

"No," I replied, "that's an imaginary line all round the world, where the sea and sky are supposed to meet; and round this line you'll see the sun going for six months together, without any night at all, Jack."

"The wonderful works of nathur!" exclaimed Dillon, as he sat down by our guard-fire and folded his cloak about him to enjoy his dhudeen, repeating every now and then to himself, as if conning a lesson, "Horizon, North Pole, Spitvirgin."

Meanwhile, I kept a sharp look-out, and was, in fact, surprised at the unusual number of bivouac fires in the enemy's lines. The sound of voices, also, and peals of merriment, came occasionally on the breeze, which led me to imagine that it was the celebration of some anniversary, or the birth of another little Napoleon. "If this be not the case," I said to myself, "they intend to beat us up; but we're all ready for them; and yonder, dark as it is, I can distinguish three or four of our advanced sentries evidently on the alert."

Satisfied that all was right, I began to reflect on my own untoward destiny, and bemoaned my fate to be thus baffled at the critical

moment of my existence, when bliss unutterable was about to crown my most ardent wishes. From my own sufferings I adverted to those of Juliana, who was doubtless at that moment looking for my promised visit, and expecting the happy tidings of release. "Poor dear soul!" I mentally exclaimed, "what a disappointment she will suffer! And how her heart will be wrung, either by her fears for my safety or suspicion of my fidelity! Would to Heaven I could see her, if only for ten minutes, to relieve her mind, and bid her hope for happier times."

In the midst of my reveries, Conolly rushed up to me, exclaiming: "Sir, sir, here's Lord Wellington coming to see you."

"Nonsense, man, you're dreaming!" I replied.

"Oh, divil a cottoner in Cork," said Conolly, "if it isn't true."

Thinking that his lordship might be making a tour of the outposts, I was on the point of waking Dillon, who was snoring by the guard-fire with his dhudheen in his mouth, when Galway rode up.

"Oh, it's you William," I exclaimed, greatly relieved. "Conolly, take the horse."

"Walk him about, my man," said Galway, "I have had a pretty sharp ride."

"Hurp an dhoul!" exclaimed Conolly *sotto voce*, as he walked off with the horse; "it's only an *edge-acong* after all!"

CHAPTER XLII.

THE CALL OF HONOUR.

My old schoolfellow and I now sat down by the guard-fire, each with a cigar in his mouth, and a horn of stiff grog in his hand; and a delightful chat we had together for a full hour at least, mutually relating our adventures and fighting our school-boy battles over again: the only interruption we experienced being an occasional snort from Dillon, or an exclamation of "North Pole! horizon! Spitvirgin! oh trumpery Moses!"

But though I found Galway extremely amusing, and highly improved by his staff discipline, unhappy thoughts frequently marred my enjoyment, owing to the vexatious turn my affairs had taken, and the threatening aspect of my amorous planet. I began to ruminate on future plans, till at length it suddenly occurred to me that I might pay a flying visit to poor Juliana, to relieve her mind from the load of anxiety which I knew would oppress it. I therefore begged Galway, who had always been a great crony of mine, to lend me his horse and staff coat and hat, to pay a short visit at Santa Clara, on which the life or death of a very dear friend depended, and to take my post and don my regimentals in the interim.

The request at first startled him; but on my repeated solicitation he consented; proposing, however, that we should wake Dillon, and get him to acquiesce in the arrangement.

"No, no," I replied, "he'll sleep there sound enough till *réveillée*, and I shall be back long before. Besides, Jack is sometimes such a confounded martinet, that he would object at once; but when the thing is done, he'll never blab."

"Well, then," said Galway, "go, in God's name. You were always a lucky fellow, and I depend upon that: but if I should be picked off in a long shot, as Sir Lucius says, won't the great lord wonder at losing one of his aide-de-camps in a dog-kennel like this."

"Don't alarm yourself," I replied; "we are on such excellent terms with the *parlez-vous*, that long shots are even more scarce than long commons on both sides."

"Then give me the *carte du pays*," said Galway.

"You see where my captain lies," I replied, "down among the dead men: but yonder are all my non-commissioned, looking out sharp over the breastwork; and from this point you can take in a range of four advanced sentries at one glance."

"I twig them," said Galway; "now then be off, and don't be there before you're back again."

I sprang into the saddle and dashed forward over the broken ground in top speed, in spite of the darkness that prevailed; while the countersign and my staff uniform smoothed all difficulties in my progress through the lines: it being naturally concluded that I must be the bearer of important orders from head-quarters, or I wouldn't ride in that dare-devil fashion. At length I reached Santa Clara as the convent clock struck twelve.

The village was silent as the grave: the troops who occupied it, with the few of its inhabitants who still remained, were equally sunk in sleep, and nothing was heard but the regular footfall of the sentry at the main-guard, who ported arms as I passed and gave him the countersign. I alighted, fastened my horse to a post within his walk, and requesting he would keep an eye upon him, I passed on towards the convent of Santa Clara.

My heart beat with anticipated joy as I approached the sacred edifice, within whose walls I had passed so many happy hours with my Juliana. Avoiding the wing appropriated as an hospital, to prevent recognition, I crept silently along under the lofty building towards the cells of the novices, so well known to me that I could have found my way blindfold: but, before I had reached the little window of Juliana's cell, a low and mournful strain of such exquisite melody stole upon my ear, that for a moment I was utterly bewildered, and knew not where I was or what I was about.

The well-remembered words and music of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater*, or, Hymn to the Virgin, at length restored me to consciousness. It was the matin service of the nuns and novices; and as the swell of vocal harmony rose on the air in the *inflammatus*, I thought I could discern my Juliana's voice, purer, more brilliant, and more heavenly than those of her companions. My agitated soul was calmed by this affecting appeal to more poignant woes than my own; the grosser passions of my nature were purified and refined by the celestial spirit of the melody, and with something like a feeling of holy awe, I

awaited the termination of the service before I approached the window of my beloved.

A light shone through it at that very instant, and I was aware that Juliana had just returned from the chapel. I therefore took up a few small pebbles and threw them across the moat at the casement. The light instantly disappeared, and I rushed along the garden wall till I came under the fig tree. Taking the coil of rope from its hiding place, I pitched one end of it over the well-known branch, and soon swung myself to the top of the wall; jumping down from which, I was just in time to receive the panting Juliana in my arms.

"Alma mia!" she exclaimed, "you cannot imagine how unhappy I have been at your absence. What has delayed you so long?"

I related to her my day's adventure, which terribly depressed her spirits. Her unhappy destiny, she said, was now beginning to unfold itself; and the sudden termination of her felicity must assuredly be a judgment from heaven for the breach of her anticipated vows.

I said everything I could to reassure and comfort her: I told her that I would still be near her, always within call, and ready to defend her from every evil; but with a melancholy voice, she said, that the period was approaching when she must either irrevocably take the veil, or decline it: that the latter proceeding would disgrace her in the eyes of the world, and estrange from her for ever her justly-incensed family; while to take the veil would, on the other hand, still more effectually crown her wretchedness.

In short, nothing could assuage the misery of my poor Juliana: she had so firmly fixed her mind on flying with me from the hated walls of her prison, on becoming my wife, and living with me contented and happy in a new land, and surrounded by a new circle of admiring friends and relatives—that every effort of mine was fruitless to counteract the misery of her disappointment.

I, myself, was plunged in the deepest wretchedness. My heart was torn, not only with my own sufferings, but with those of the woman I loved more dearly than all the world; and my brain was racked with schemes and stratagems to elude, or escape from, the impending evil. At length, will it be believed that I was mad enough to propose instant flight? I urged Juliana to mount behind me, on my friend Galway's horse; to gallop off to Lisbon, embark on board the *Fanny*, which was positively to sail at six in the morning; and before our flight could be discovered, we should be ploughing the broad waves of the Bay of Biscay; to live in some sequestered nook, of some far distant land, all in all to each other,—

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

Yes! the reader may smile at my folly, or pity my madness; but such was the distracted frame of mind into which Juliana's tears and lamentations had thrown me, that I was ready to sacrifice name, and fame, and honour, and every good this world contains, to soothe the misery of the woman I adored!

It is true, I laid the flattering unction to my soul, that I had really

got my leave and sick certificate in my pocket: that the army was now in a state of total inaction, and likely to continue so during the winter, at least; and that before the opening of the campaign in spring I might return, after placing Juliana in the bosom of my family, and resume my duties before a trigger had been pulled. As regarded my interview that day with Lord Wellington, I made no account of it. His lordship would, doubtless, forget the whole occurrence in the multiplicity of more important affairs, and I knew that Galway would not betray me; while in Dillon and Colonel Colborne I had two staunch friends, who would smooth over any difficulty that might obstruct my return to my regiment.

Such was the false and baseless train of reasoning by which I endeavoured to gloss over the fatal error I was about to commit, while poor Juliana, equally deceived as myself by such specious arguments, but still more excusable from her ignorance of what I was really about to sacrifice, clung round my neck, wild with joy, and urged me to hasten our departure.

So great, in fact, was my infatuation, that I was on the point of assisting her to climb the fig-tree for that purpose, when a distant roar of musketry broke upon the silence of the night, or rather of the morning, for it was then about two o'clock.

"Oh heavens!" I exclaimed, "what is that?"

I had scarcely uttered the words, when another roar of running fire was heard along the line, intermingled with the sound of cannon; at first single guns, and then whole volleys of heavy metal from the batteries.

"The lines are attacked!" I cried, gnashing my teeth in agony, "and I am absent from my post! Fool! Idiot! Madman that I am!"

I pressed the poor trembling girl in my arms, the last, last sad embrace; and kissed her with intense fondness, as I exclaimed, in Italian,—

"Fino al domani, carissima mia!"

"Addio per sempre!" she replied, with a heavy sigh,—the last prophetic words I ever heard her utter.

Overwhelmed with contending emotions, I sprang up the fig-tree, leaped from the wall, a depth of twenty feet, and ran like lightning to my horse. The guard was under arms, and the sentry, as he held my stirrup, said:—

"We're in for it, sir; they'll come this way before long."

"And I absent from my post!" I mentally exclaimed. "My brave companions slaughtered through my desertion!"

Maddened at the idea, I dashed the spurs into my spirited steed, which plunged forward at a tremendous pace, as if equally anxious with myself to reach the scene of action. While I thus tore along upon ground which, even in broad daylight, I should have ridden over cautiously, a voice would occasionally exclaim,—

"There goes another of the staff! They'll soon be here!"

Other sound than this there was none. The batteries were manned, and gunners with port-fires ready for the word: the trenches were

lined with pickets, lying forward on the breastwork, with muzzles ready pointed towards the foe; and the battalions on their respective parades, with fixed bayonets, standing at ease; all with that silent, steady, and unshaken firmness that distinguishes the British soldier in front of the enemy.

Still, onward I drove, heedless of danger or obstruction; cutting round batteries, leaping over *chevaux-de-frises*, stumbling over broken-up roads, and splashing through artificial lakes and inundations, till I reached my post, and was joyfully received by Galway.

"You have just saved your bacon!" he said, as we exchanged uniforms. "I told you there would be wigs on the green before long. But, for heaven's sake, look at Dillon."

Whether it was the effect of the canteen, or the dhudheen, or both, Jack was awfully mystified: he had just been roused from a deep sleep, and fancying that the post was attacked, he ran about flourishing his sabre, and exclaiming, at every whiff of the trenchant blade:—

"Down with them! Skiver the villains! Spit the virgins from the horizon to the North Pole!"

"But what is the row, after all?" I demanded.

"You'll soon know," replied Galway; "for here comes Stanhope, with orders."

"Advance, Fifty-second!" cried Captain Stanhope, of the head-quarter staff; "the enemy are in full retreat!"

We gave three cheers that made the welkin ring again; and Dillon, having now come to his recollection, shouted, with stentorian lungs,—

"Fifty-second—trail arms! Double!"

The vain and futile visions of love and connubial happiness vanished from my breast; and, impelled by the noble thirst of military fame—the never-failing stimulant of youth—the favourite reminiscence of age—the all-engrossing theme of the poet and historian—I sprang forward, at the head of my section, in our memorable pursuit of Massena's invincible "Army of Portugal," hoping soon to fall in the arms of victory, since I could no longer live, but dishonoured, with my lovely nun.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE STORMING PARTY.

THE French having had a good start of us, by the silence and celerity of their movements, we did not come up with their rear guard till we found them in position between Santarem and Cartaxo, when some skirmishing took place, with the usual casualties on both sides. Lord Wellington, believing that the former place was only occupied by Massena's rear-guard, resolved to force it without delay; but, on a close reconnaissance, it was found that the whole French army were strongly posted in and about Santarem, their lines being covered

with such formidable field-works as rendered an attack not only precarious, but exceedingly hazardous indeed.

The periodical rains having now set in, and the weather becoming more than usually boisterous and inclement, both armies were compelled to remain in a state of inactivity. This continued for the whole winter, during which little of military interest occurred, except the constant harassing of the French by the Portuguese militia, under their enterprising English officers.

Lord Wellington established his head-quarters at Cartaxo, in which small place upwards of six thousand troops were stowed away: every hut, stable, and cow-shed being occupied as officers' quarters, and the soldiers bivouacking amongst the ruins left by the French; while the face of the country for many miles around displayed the bivouac fires of our troops, encamped, with little or no shelter, under the canopy of heaven.

The Light Division occupied the outposts in front of Cartaxo; our cantonments being established at the village of Vallée, where our regiment was distributed in companies, in some deserted farm-houses on both sides of the road. Close in our front ran the Rio Mayor; over which and some marshy ground beyond lay the bridge of Santarem, nearly half-a-mile in length. The arches of this bridge were mined, and we had double sentries upon it; the French sentries being posted about two hundred yards beyond ours, while on a gentle eminence in their rear, stood the French camp, huddled with all the regularity and attention to comfort peculiar to that nation when in the field. Beyond the French camp rose the towers and steeples of Santarem, upon an eminence richly clothed on all sides with olive groves.

Though the French and English troops lay within shell, and even cannon range, yet, as if by tacit agreement, they never once molested each other, for nearly five months that we were thus stationed in sight of our respective encampments; a sort of friendly intercourse being, moreover, established between the outlying pickets and sentries of both armies. During this period we enjoyed a state of profound repose; amusing ourselves with hunting, shooting, fishing, and card-playing, as if we had really nothing else in the world to think of, or care about.

Dillon and I had taken up our quarters in the only habitable room of a ruined farm-house, within pistol-shot of the bridge: and here one evening, the 5th of March, 1811, as well as I can recollect, he and I were sitting over the embers of our fire, smoking our cigars, and chatting at intervals on the actual posture of affairs and the future prospects of our gallant army.

"Surely," said Dillon, as the shades of night were thickening about us, "that Conolly of yours must have gone astray, and tumbled into the river. Here we are in the dark, and not a drop of black-strap in the house to wet our whistles with. I wonder what can keep him now?"

"Heaven knows!" I replied. "Perhaps he is looking for another cuckoo-clock amongst the ruins."

An hour passed, and no Conolly made his appearance, to get us a light and renew our fire, which was gradually dying of inanition in the capacious fire-place. Dillon began to get impatient, and grew testy at the continued absence of my valet, his own servant being on sentry at the bridge; when, in the midst of a long pause, a musket-shot was suddenly heard in that direction. This was a circumstance so very unusual, that it attracted our immediate attention, and we both rushed out to see what the matter was.

The report of the musket, however, was succeeded by a dead silence; and, instead of producing others in return, the repose of the French outpost in our front seemed uninterrupted, while the momentary attention created on our side speedily died away.

"Some drunken fellow or other," said Dillon, as we returned to our chimney-corner. "He'll catch it in the morning, when his ammunition is counted."

Our fire was now almost entirely out; emitting a faint flicker occasionally, which gleamed along the smoky walls of our domicile and then died away, to be succeeded by another still fainter. Dillon threw himself upon our guard-bed to try and get a snooze; and I fell into a rumination on heaven and earth, with all their respective mysteries; when a heavy tramping was heard in a long passage that led to our room, and, before I could give an alarm, in staggered Mr. Conolly, with something upon his back.

"What is the meaning of all this?" I demanded, somewhat tartly. "What have you got there, you great lout?"

"Faith, I have got a sentry, sir," replied Conolly; "I shot him as clane as a whistle."

"Shot a sentry!" we both exclaimed; "not an English sentry, you wretch?"

"Not a bit of it, sir," replied Conolly, "but a raial downright Frenchman."

"A Frenchman!" repeated Dillon.

"Yis, sir," said Conolly; "the sentry at the other end of the bridge."

"Why did you shoot him, you scoundrel?" I demanded, in a rage at such a wanton piece of cruelty.

"Because he had his gun presented at me," replied Conolly; "and if I hadn't the first shot, he'd have settled my hash soon enough."

"But why did you bring the carrion in here?" demanded Dillon, in a voice of thunder.

"Why, then, captain," replied Conolly, in a deprecating tone, "'tis because the men are always jibing and jairing me. One says, 'You're a coward, Conolly!' Another says, 'You're a poltroon!' A third says, 'You never shot a Frenchman!' and a fourth says, 'He shuts both eyes when he pulls the trigger.' So, to convince 'em of it, your honour, I crept very quietly over the bridge jist now; till finding Jack Doolan, the captain's servant, taking a snooze on his post, I made bould with his musket; and stailing up to the Frenchman, to make a long story short, I shot him right between the eyes, yer honour."

"Strike a light," said Dillon, "and let us see if he's dead."

"Oh, I'll engage he's dead enough," said Conolly. "I think I must have shot the very sowl out of him, for his corpse is as light as a feather."

A piece of pine-torch was now ignited at the embers; and the dead Frenchman, on examination, proved to be a man of straw in regimentals, to the infinite amusement of a dozen of the picket who had crowded in after Conolly.

"That's another trick of the ould boy!" exclaimed my crest-fallen valet; "but if ever I stail a vargin or shoot a sentry again——"

"They're off!" cried Dillon with a shout, as he sprang upon his legs; "the villains are off, and have left us in the lurch again. Bugler, sound advance!"

Forth rang the cheering notes of the bugle, as the picket advanced in order to the bridge, which we passed unmolested, and soon found that the bird had really flown: the French camp was left all standing, but not a human being was to be seen except ourselves.

The retreat of Massena being duly reported at head-quarters, orders were as promptly issued for advance; and, at daybreak on the 6th of March, we resumed our pursuit of the "army of Portugal." Conolly's adventure was much laughed at, yet it gave us a start of five or six hours in our chase of the enemy.

But I am not writing a history of the war; and the exploits of the Light Division do not require the aid of my feeble pen to transmit them to posterity. To the luminous page of Napier I must therefore refer the reader for a graphic account of that glorious campaign in which we drove the French out of Portugal; including the brilliant affairs of Redinha, Sabugal, &c., in which we added largely to our former laurels. Neither shall I attempt to describe the battle of Fuentes de Oñoro, which immortalized the following short campaign, and finally drove Massena, *l'enfant gâté de la victoire*, out of Spain, as the saying is, with his finger in his mouth. Though we had the honour of contributing largely to that splendid victory, I must leave the details to a more worthy historian, and hasten on to the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo, where my adventures were very nearly brought to a sudden termination.

This celebrated city stands on high ground, on the right bank of the Agueda, which is here fordable in many places. Four divisions of the army, of which ours was one, were intrusted with the duties of the siege; and on the 8th of January, 1812, the investment was regularly commenced, under a heavy cannonade from the town. In spite of this, however, an important outwork, the fortified convent of San Francisco, was gallantly stormed and carried by detachments from our division.

From this period till the 19th, the siege was vigorously pressed; and the fortifications of Rodrigo, which had been greatly strengthened by the French, were battered in breach by our heavy guns. On the morning of the 19th, two breaches being declared practicable, Lord Wellington decided on storming them that night.

Accordingly, at eight o'clock on Sunday evening, the third, light, and Portuguese divisions, under Picton, Crawfurd, and Pack—three gallant fellows as ever breathed—moved from the camp, and concealed themselves in the trenches, until the signal was given for the attack. The storming party in which I had enrolled myself was commanded by Major George Napier, of my regiment.

Meanwhile, the French were not idle. The larger breach of the two, which was destined for Picton's division, exposed a shattered front of one hundred feet, which had been carefully mined; the base of the wall being strewn with shells and grenades, and the top, which the troops might escalate, being similarly defended. A deep retrenchment was cut behind, to insulate the broken rampart, in the event of its being carried by storm. The lesser breach was narrower at the top, and exceedingly steep; with a four-and-twenty pounder turned sideways, that blocked the passage up, except an opening between the muzzle and the wall, by which two files might enter.

Darkness had no sooner closed over the devoted city, than our forlorn hope moved on to the convent of San Francisco, then garrisoned by the 40th regiment, the walls of which sheltered us from the enemy's fire. Here the men threw off their packs, unbuckled their stocks, and got rid of all other impediments to the most active and desperate exertions. General Crawfurd, who led us in person, addressed a few inspiring words to us, while we stood formed under the convent wall, in a clear, distinct, and manly tone,—the last time, alas! we were to hear the sound of that voice which had so often led us on to victory.

With anxious hearts every one was now eagerly watching for the signal, when the sonorous bell of the town clock struck the fated hour. Up went the rocket from one of the batteries, and General Crawfurd calling out, "Now lads for the breach!" we rushed forward in double quick from the friendly shelter which had hitherto concealed us.

No sooner had we cleared the convent wall, and were fairly exposed to the enemy, than a storm of round, grape, and canister shot was poured upon us with destructive fury and deadly effect; our position being rendered clearly visible by innumerable fire-balls, which came flashing incessantly from the ramparts. In spite, however, of this hail-storm of multifarious missiles, on we rushed with increasing velocity towards the breach, when General Crawfurd, who was only two paces in front of me, was struck with several bullets, and fell back, mortally wounded, into my arms.

With indescribable feelings, I laid my gallant and beloved leader gently upon the ground, and bent over him in speechless agony; but with an expiring effort, he cried out, "Forward, sir, and leave me to my fate!"

Just at that moment, the leading section of our division coming up, I confided the general to their care, and rushed madly on to overtake the storming party to which I belonged, with vows and threats of vengeance on the foe.

But, rapid as the occurrence had been, my party was already out of sight; and, in attempting to reach them by a short cut, I became

entangled in some old mines, which had been exploded in the glacis during this and the former siege. Frantic at the idea of being thrown out altogether, while my more fortunate companions were reaping glorious laurels, I made incredible efforts to reach the scene of action; and at length, by jumping down from the crest of the glacis into the ditch, at the imminent hazard of my neck, I succeeded in joining, not my own storming party, but that of Picton's division, which was then assaulting the great breach.

Dreadful, indeed, was the slaughter occasioned amongst the assailants at this place, by the explosion of mines, shells, grenades, and other combustibles; with the murderous fire kept up by the French from the summit of the breach and neighbouring ramparts, and the houses which overtopped them. But up we went, unheeding the terrible shower of lead and iron; while I, waving my sword and shouting aloud for followers, sprang up the steep ascent of shattered fragments, far before the rest. So wonderful, indeed, was the activity inspired by the excitement of the scene, that in another minute or two I should have been on the summit of the breach, when a musket-ball struck me in the left thigh, and I fell to the ground with a yell of anger and despair.

Ah! many a moment of agony have I passed in my weary pilgrimage through life, but never anything to equal what I felt at that instant. To see the glorious meed of victory, mine as I thought but a moment before, thus suddenly wrenched from my grasp, was not to be borne. I screamed, I wept like a child, and tore my hair out by handfuls, till at last, attracted by my outcries, which soared above the infernal din all round, a gigantic grenadier, who was now the leader of our party, approached and said, in a tone of commiseration, "Poor young gentleman, are you badly hurt, that you sing out that way?"

"Oh, curse the hurt!" I exclaimed; "I don't care a straw about it, if I could only get to the top of the breach."

"Faith," said the grenadier, "you're one of the right sort, any how: but, heavenly Mary!" he continued, as a fire-ball came blazing in between us, making us visible to each other, — "heavenly Mary! what do I see? 'Tis my own dear nephew!"

"Uncle, uncle!" I cried, now also recognizing him; "if ever you had a spark of affection for my poor mother, help me up to the top of the breach, and let me die at least in glory."

"That I will, my boy," cried my uncle. "Here, scramble up on my back, and I'll engage you shall be the first man on the top. Sure you're not heavier than the knapsack I threw away down there in the ditch. That's it—now hold fast. Fogh volliah! clear the way, you rascally frog-eaters! Here's a couple of Tipperary boys for you!"

The scene which has taken so long in the narration, occupied only a moment; and upwards again rushed my glorious uncle at the head of the storming party; while I, waving my sword, shouted madly, — "Forward! forward!"

The appeal was not made in vain: the stormers of the Fighting Division were not to be denied, and all went down before the fury of their assault. After a short but severe struggle, the breach was won: we gained the summit, the gallant General Henry Mackinnon being

amongst the leading files ; and we were in the act of cheering loudly for our victory, when a fearful explosion took place, like a rumbling peal of thunder. I then felt myself lifted, as it were, by some invisible hand from the broad shoulders of my uncle, and flung aloft in a series of summersets, till at last I fell upon something soft and warm, and became totally insensible to the cares, anxieties, hopes, and wishes of this perishable world.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE LADY ABBESS.

FOR three weeks, as I afterwards learned, I remained in a state of insensibility, varied at times by violent paroxysms, resulting from a concussion of the brain. At the end of this period, I awoke one fine morning from a deep slumber, and found my mind perfectly settled, but my body reduced to a skeleton, and in a deplorable state of exhaustion.

I looked around me in silent amazement, such as Adam may be supposed to have felt when, at a mature age, he found himself suddenly ushered into this best of all possible worlds, before woman, "of all created things the last and best," had as yet made her appearance.

I was lying in a comfortable truckle bed, in a large half-furnished apartment, through the windows of which the sun was shining cheerfully. My servant Conolly was apparently busied about some household arrangements, and Jack Dillon was sitting by my side : between these two originals a dialogue had apparently been going on, of which I only caught the conclusion.

"Now, Conolly," said my friend, "I'm thinking that I'll take my dinner here to-day, and go over to the camp in the cool of the evening. What have you got in the house?"

"Well, sir," said Conolly, "there's a fine lump of a Stramajura* ham."

"That's not bad to begin with," said Dillon. "Them Stramajura pigs that feed upon acorns, make beautiful bacon, I confess. What else have you got?"

"Then I have got a fine *galina*," replied Conolly ; "the name these Spaniels give to a capon."

"Oh ! they're always miscalling things out of their proper names," said Dillon. "Sure, they call a sword a *spade*, the naygurs ; and a hat a *sunburner*." This was Jack's version of *sombrero*.

"Do they, sir?" said Conolly. "The Lord be praised ! What a fine thing it is to have book-learning like your honour."

"Well, I flatter myself," returned Dillon, "that I'm not much in the background with 'Johnson's Dictionary,' and the 'Elegant Extracts ;' and though I give way to your master sometimes, as I have a regard for the poor boy, oh, trumpery Moses ! he's not fit to hold a candle to me in Spanish."

Here Jack, to show his learning, poured forth a whole canto of gibberish in rhyme; an *olla podrida* of Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Latin; a jumble of scraps learned by rote, without any consecutive meaning, which Old Nick himself, though a great linguist, would fail to decipher.

"Glory be to the Holy Vargin!" exclaimed Conolly; "what a pity you are not a good Catholic, sir."

"Why so?" demanded Dillon.

"Sure, then, you'd make an iligant priest, sir," replied Conolly. "I'll be bound, 'tis you that would give 'em the *Padheren Aves* in style, and the credos, and the *Dominy-foby-scums*."

"May be I could, and may be I couldn't," said Dillon, with affected modesty. "But, tell me, Conolly, why do you think I'm not a good Catholic, after all?"

"Sure, I seen you go to church often and often, amongst the heretics," replied Conolly, "before your honour kem to these foreign parts."

"Oh, trumpery Moses!" cried Dillon; "and what does that signify? Would you call my dog Nep, there, a fish, because he takes the water, and dives like a duck?"

"No, sir, I wouldn't," replied Conolly. "Divil a bit of fish is Nep at all, at all; but as purty a bit of flesh as ever worried a cat, your honour."

Nep, who was present, keeping an eye on the culinary department, wagged his tail at this complimentary assertion of Conolly's; and Dillon continued,—

"'Tis the same with me, Conolly. If Nep goes into the water for his own convenience, and not because he's a fish; why shouldn't I go to church for my own convenience, and not because I'm a heretic? Answer me that, Conolly," he continued, with all the triumph of an Oxford wrangler, who has got his opponent between the horns of a dilemma.

"Divil a one of me knows, sir," said Conolly. "I can't understand the rights of it, at all, at all."

"You'll understand it, my man," said Dillon, "when you are senior lieutenant of your regiment, and can't get your company for being a Catholic."

"Ethen, sir, is that the law?" demanded Conolly.

"Them is the panial statues," replied Dillon.

"What the dickens is the panial statues?" asked Conolly.

"Oh, very queer things," replied Dillon; "full of law, and learning, and Latin, to the backbone. Oh, trumpery Moses! if I was to explain 'em to you, you'd know no more about 'em than I do myself."

"Lord be praised!" said Conolly; "what a fine thing book-larning is!"

"Now, there was my brave ould commanding officer, Colonel Stack," said Dillon, "who had been thirty years in the service, and fought in ten pitched battles, besides ever so many skrimmages, with a matter of fifteen wounds in his body; he couldn't get his promotion all along of it, till at last, one day he said to the Juke,—

“‘What is the raison of it, my lord juke?’ says he. ‘Will your royal highness tell me that?’”

“‘Well, Stack,’ said the juke, good-naturedly—for, let ’em talk as they will, Conolly, but he’s a raial gentleman—‘there is a raison for it, Stack,’ says he.

“‘What is it, my lord juke?’ says Stack.

“‘Well, come now, Stack,’ says the juke, ‘tell me honestly what religion you are of?’”

“‘My lord juke,’ says Stack, ‘I’m of the religion of a major-general.’

“‘Then, by St. George!’ says the juke, with a hearty laugh, ‘you shall have your promotion, Stack!’ And the very next day he was gazetted. Oh, trumperry Moses! isn’t he a jewel of a juke!”

“Oh, now I begin to sec,” said Conolly. “We must all go to heaven with head-quarters, or not at all.”

“That’s just it,” said Dillon; “and, now, Conolly, let me know if you have got any murphies.”

“The sorrow a one, sir,” replied Conolly. “Sure, they say, in this outlandish country, that they’re only fit for the pigs.”

“Bad luck to the liars!” exclaimed Dillon; “there’s no other fruit in the world equal to a maily potato. Well then, we must rough it with that: so, Conolly, you just roast that galina, boil the Stramajura ham; and, with a bottle of Val de Peñas, and a toothful of Cognac after, with a dhudheen——”

“By St. George, I’ll be in your mess, Dillon,” I exclaimed, sitting bolt upright in my bed, “for I feel most confoundedly peckish.”

Dillon sprang from his seat as if electrified, and gazed at me for some time with his mouth wide open, and his cheeks as pale as ashes, at last he exclaimed—

“Then, by the Cross of Kilshandra! them is the most sensible words you have spoken these three weeks; and right glad am I to hear them from you, Percy, my darling!”

Conolly having also expressed his delight with equal eloquence, at my coming to my senses, and talking like a Christian once more, it was settled that the galina should be boiled instead of roasted, as the broth, for the present at least, would be quite strong enough for my weak stomach.

“Oh, trumperry Moses!” cried Dillon, while dinner was preparing; “you never saw such tricks and figaries as you have been playing for the six weeks you were mad.”

“Have I been mad?” I demanded.

“As fifty cats in a wallet,” replied Dillon. “Hasn’t he, Conolly?”

“I never seen anything like it, sir,” said Conolly. “One night he thought he was a loaded 24-pounder going to burst, and he kept constantly shouting ‘Stand out of the way, or I’ll blow you up.’”

“Another time,” said Dillon, “nothing would serve you but calling over the muster-roll of the company, which you did for six mortal hours, without stopping or missing a man.”

“And every time he came to the end, sir,” said Conolly, “he’d begin again, sir, as regular as clock-work. I’m thinking there isn’t a paymaster in the sarvice could do the like.”

"Oh, but the night," said Dillon, "you thought you had a hold of the horns of the moon, didn't you make a jolly row?"

"We had six grenadiers in, sir, to hould him that night," added Conolly, "and they couldn't do it till the doctor fleabottomized him, as he called it."

"But that was cakes and ale," said Dillon, "to the day he fancied he was riding on the say-sarpent that the Yankees have discovered. That was the time the doctor said he had a discussion of the brain, though at first he thought it was dilarious trimmings."

Many more of my "figaries" Dillon recounted to me, while Conolly was employed in the culinary department. I then asked him to give me an account of the storming, of which I had but a very confused recollection.

"Well, Percy," he said, "you are always getting into the wrong box. First and foremost, you come amongst us as if you had dropped from one of the seven elements, in the dress of a faymale señora. Then nothing would you do, but you must charge head foremost into the very centre of a column of French dragoons; and, last of all, instead of going to the small aisy braich with your own regiment, oh, trumpery Moses, you must stick yourself at the very head of Picton's tremendous attack, riding to the top of the rampart on the back of a grenadier."

"Ah, that grenadier!" I exclaimed; "what is become of him? Is he dead or alive?"

"Oh, divil a one of that party is alive but yourself," replied Dillon.

"Alas! my poor, dear, gallant uncle," I mentally exclaimed, "in leaving this world like a hero, you had not even the satisfaction of knowing that your bravery was appreciated."

"You were all blown up by the explosion of a magazine," continued my friend, "and General McKinnon, with many other fine fellows, are all gone to kingdom come. But do you know how you escaped, Percy?"

"I haven't the slightest idea," I replied.

"Luckily for you," said Dillon, "there was a cavalry barracks just under the rampart where the explosion took place; and after you had made as many summersets as a ropedancer in a circus, you were lodged, quite snug and easy, in a nice, soft, warm bed of stable litter; and that's where they found you, agraph."

Dillon then entered into a long detail of the successful result of the attack; the triumph of which was sadly damped, however, by the loss of two such gallant leaders as Crawford and McKinnon. He next launched into a description, at once amusing and melancholy, of the appearance of our camp for two or three days after the fall of Rodrigo, when the men, having partly recovered from the drunkenness which had immediately succeeded it, came staggering from the town with their plunder. Some were dressed fantastically as priests, others as nuns, bull-fighters, bolero-dancers, &c.; but all were selling for trifling sums such articles of value as they had secured in their progress through the deserted houses, the principal purchasers of the booty being the Spaniards themselves, who flocked in vast numbers to the camp for that express purpose.

"But here comes Conolly with dinner," said Dillon, "and I'll tell you no more till you and I have had some food; for talking is bad on an empty stomach."

A basin of good broth, with a wing of the galina, and a glass of wine-and-water, made me feel wonderfully refreshed, and I almost fancied I could get up; but, in making the attempt, I fell back again, helpless and powerless.

"See that, now!" said Dillon. "You must have patience, Percy, and two or three weeks more will bring you into statty-co. But I have good news to comfort you, in the mean time, my boy. You have got your lieutenancy—your name appeared in the last *Gazette*."

"But I hope," I said, "they won't remove me from your company, Dillon."

Poor Jack looked very blank at this; and, with all the tenderness he could assume, informed me that I was promoted into another regiment.

"What! what!" I exclaimed, "into another regiment. And who has got the vacancy in the 52nd?"

"A Wellington Overall," replied Dillon.

"Then let them take back their promotion," I exclaimed, in a terrible sulk; "I'll not have it—I'll not quit my dear old regiment, in which I have been so happy."

Dillon combated this idea with all the power of his eloquence. He said, and truly, "that I must either take the promotion as it was given, or quit the service; that I was appointed to a crack regiment, which had, moreover, one battalion in India, where I would very soon become a milliner."

"A milliner!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," replied Dillon; "one of them nabobs that make millions of rupees, and ride a-horseback upon elephants."

Jack's eloquence, however, was unavailing, and I railed against destiny in unmeasured terms for this scurvy trick, which at once put an end to all my hopes of fame and promotion, the two bright stars I worshipped.

"But my dear fellow," said Dillon, "you must keep very quiet, for the doctor says if you go dilarious again he'll have to cut a piece out of your skull, and put a silver plate over your brain-pan."

But I shall not trouble the reader with the details of a sick room: suffice it to say, that in three or four weeks I was once more upon my legs, and daily gaining strength: while the calm reflection I had enjoyed during my illness reconciled me to my fate, and I prepared to bear my good fortune like a man.

I was at length ordered home to join my new regiment, and took an affectionate leave of my old brother-officers. Dillon cried like a child, and made me promise to write to him about all the strange sights I should see in the East—especially the pagoda-tree, the golden rock of Trichinopoly, and the cantonment of Dum-dum.

"I'll engage," said Jack, with a sneer at the fair sex, "that the soldiers don't get leave to marry at Dumb-dumb, as they do amongst us."

Poor Conolly howled and blubbered like an overgrown baby; and

when I put two doubloons into his hand, he exclaimed, still grasping them very tightly, however,—

“Devil a one of me will take ’em from your honour; sure you have more than ped me honestly before.”

“But this is a gift, Conolly,” I said; “and you know I never take back a gift.”

“Faix, that’s true enough,” responded Conolly, putting the doubloons in his fob. “Then, the blessing of God be about you, sir, and may the world wondher at the luck you’ll have!”

I gave two more doubloons to the pay-sergeant of my company, as a treat for the brave fellows with whom I had led a rough-and-tumble sort of life so long; and all who were off duty accompanied me for a mile or two on my journey, when they gave me three hearty cheers at parting. I then set off for Lisbon, where I found a transport ready to sail with invalids, and secured a berth on board.

Before I sailed, however, I determined to pay one last visit to Santa Clara, a name that still clung to my heart, and recalled many a scene of vanished happiness. Though I had experienced many a rough vicissitude since I last beheld that peaceful and pious retreat, the souvenirs connected with it were still fresh and verdant in my memory’s waste; and, with a mingled feeling of joy and sadness, I threw myself into one of the public vehicles which plied to and from that neighbourhood.

I shall not pretend to define the precise object that urged me to this step: a longing desire to see Juliana once more predominated, of course—and perhaps a lingering hope of still effecting her abduction mingled itself with motives more worthy of her and myself; for I could no longer be ignorant that she was now, in reality, devoted by her vow to heaven, and ought to be sacred from any further attempts on the peaceful sanctity of her chosen mission.

In a state of nervous agitation and uncertainty as to my real motives and ulterior views, I at length arrived at the dear village, where, folding my Spanish capa about me, pulling my Andalusian sombrero over my brows, and giving my moustachios a curl upwards, I sauntered towards the well-known spot, every projecting ornament or lofty pinnacle of the splendid edifice recalling some heavenly look or treasured expression of my sainted Juliana.

The bell of the convent church was ringing loudly for service, and crowds were flocking into the sacred edifice, which appeared to be decorated with more than usual richness and magnificence. I mingled with the people, and learned, on inquiry, that the occasion was one of great pomp and splendour, being the inauguration of a lady abbess, in lieu of the one who had recently died. I felt, however, no interest in an event of such ordinary occurrence; the succession of one old woman to the post of another had nothing in it that could possibly affect my feelings, intensely centred as they were in an object of such supereminent attraction.

I took my place behind one of the noble pillars of the church, as near as I could to the grand altar, and thence, unnoticed and unknown, I witnessed the gorgeous ceremony in all its details. But they had no interest for me—not the slightest; my thoughts were solely bent

upon Juliana, and my eyes were incessantly directed from one nun to another, in a vain endeavour to penetrate the thick white veils which effectually concealed their features from my eager gaze.

A feeling of blank disappointment and melancholy boding was the result of my scrutiny: my bosom throbbed with the painful idea that my poor Juliana was no more; and, while the mingled sounds of voice and organ raised the soul to a higher sphere, by that affecting charm peculiar to the service of the Catholic church, imagination drew her sainted form in the attitude I had so often gazed on with delight in the apotheosis of Santa Clara, wafted to heaven by ministering angels, her hands uplifted in earnest prayer, her eyes beaming with celestial hope.

The final rite of inauguration was at length terminated, and the new lady abbess ascended the steps of the altar to bestow her benediction on the congregation; for which purpose, the rubric permitted her for the last time to lift her veil. Accustomed, as I had always been, to associate age and acerbity of expression with the dignity of this lofty function, I did not even bestow a look upon the lady abbess; till one universal murmur of admiration pervading the assembled multitude, my curiosity was excited: I looked, and, in the uncovered countenance of Santa Clara's successor, I beheld the peerless features of my Juliana!

It was with difficulty I suppressed the cry of joy that was bursting from my lips, and checked the powerful impulse to throw myself at her feet: the strife of contending passions in my breast was fearful; my brain was on fire, my eyes grew dizzy, and had I not grasped the pillar with both arms, firmly—convulsively—I should have fallen to the ground.

The features of Juliana were still of the same lovely cast; but they were pale and thin. The same intellect illumined her countenance—the same celestial smile imparted to it that fascination which never failed to win the hearts of the beholders; but they were chastened and subdued by a look of melancholy resignation and a gleam of exalted piety, as she gazed upwards, which proved that, whatever sufferings the sacrifice had cost her, she was now in reality the bride of heaven.

With a powerful effort, I restrained the maddening thoughts that filled my breast; till Juliana let fall the veil which now for ever concealed her features from the world, and retired, amidst the loud pealing of the organ, and the rich choral strains of the "Gloria in Excelsis!" In a state of mind which baffles description, I then rushed from the church; and had I not been relieved by a violent flood of tears, I must have perished on the spot.

Flying from the crowd of worshippers, who seemed greatly edified by my emotion, which, of course, they ascribed to the pangs of a suddenly awakened conscience, I threw myself into the first vehicle I could find, and hurried off to Lisbon. Once or twice, on my way thither, the idea of writing to Juliana occurred to me, to vindicate the fidelity of my affection, and bid her at least farewell; but I suppressed the ungenerous thought, and felt how much more noble it would be to leave her, ignorant even of my existence, to the calm

contemplation, and peaceful serenity of the sacred life for which she seemed predestined by Heaven.

A few hours after, I was floating on the Golden Tagus, my heart and head both sick and heavy, and my adventurous prow directed for the Land of Freedom.

CHAPTER XLV.

ALBANY BARRACKS.

AFTER a tedious and most melancholy passage, we at length arrived at Portsmouth; when, having obtained three months' leave of absence, I endeavoured for some time to dissipate my sad reflections in the pleasures of the metropolis. These were indeed a treat, after two years' sharp service in the Peninsula; but, as they did not suffice for the accomplishment of my object, I paid a visit to my friends and relations in Tipperary, where the pleasures of the field, and the charms of unbounded hospitality, banished my *ennui*, and prepared me to encounter the vicissitudes of my subsequent career.

My father had died during my service in the Peninsula, and had left me a small estate, which, though not very productive, was a welcome addition to my pay. Having, however, little or no knowledge of country affairs, apart from the sports of the field, I placed it under the entire control and management of my brother, who had always been my warmest and most attached friend.

Amongst other near relatives, I went to see the widowed mother of my poor little cousin Honoria, whose hair bracelet still maintained its position on my wrist; and the good lady received me with tears of mingled joy and sorrow.

Honoria, she said, had wept and pined after me for many months, going about the house in the most disconsolate mood, wringing her hands, and exclaiming, "Oh, Percy Blake! Percy Blake! What shall I do for my cousin Percy?"

The child's health being at length affected, she had been sent for change of air and scene to an elder sister, who was married and settled in the county of Cork. There the countess of Kingston, who had an estate in the neighbourhood, took such a fancy to Honoria that she begged to have her as a companion for her own children: with them she had been educated, and was now travelling with the countess in England and other foreign countries, as my worthy old relative expressed herself.

Having thus satisfied those yearnings for home and early ties which influence the hearts of all, however estranged by professional duties or foreign travel, I bade, as I then thought, a final adieu to my friends and relations, and proceeded, *viâ* Cork and Bristol, to the army dépôt, to embark for my new regiment in India.

Most of my readers have doubtless heard of this once celebrated army dépôt, at Albany Barracks, in the Isle of Wight, where the recruiting companies of fifty or sixty regiments on foreign service

were then collected; and where I once more found myself immersed in all the "pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war."

Albany Barracks consisted of several parallel ranges of wooden buildings, all on the ground-floor, or *rez de chaussée*, as our Gallic neighbours express it; occupying a fine healthy slope, about a mile and a half from the insular capital, Newport. These temporary structures have long been swept away, and replaced by waving fields of corn, more suited to our pacific times; but, at the period I am treating of, they were occupied by some thousands of sentient beings, full of life, animation, hope, and enterprise, whose bodies have gone to fatten many a foreign soil, or, worn out and mutilated, drag on a weary existence in the new world that has sprung up around them in their native land.

Being naturally of a gregarious and sociable disposition, as all military men necessarily must, or ought to be, I plunged at once "in medias res," as Horace says, and was voted a trump card by all the lovers, or promoters, of fun and frolic in "the Island," as sweet Vectis was called *par excellence*. It would be altogether vain in such a work as the present to attempt anything like a description of our various modes of killing time at the army dépôt: suffice it to say that dinners, balls, routs, assemblies, concerts, *déjeûners*, pic-nics, races, steeple-chases, billiards, cricket, rouge-et-noir, and blind-hookee, succeeded each other with such incessant and untiring velocity, that no time was allowed for study, thought, or reflection; but all was a maddening whirl of "fast life," long before that term was invented to indicate the comparatively tame doings of the present day.

In the above *catalogue non raisonné*, I have forgotten to mention courts-martial, duels, arrests, both civil and military, nocturnal fights with the mob of Newport, &c. &c.; but these were also pretty numerous, and diversified in adventure and result. In short, the variety of characters and incidents which the daily occurrences at Albany Barracks brought upon the scene, would fill volumes, both amusing and instructive, of that railway literature so peculiarly the taste of the present day; but I can now only give a cursory glance at occurrences which once were fraught with merriment, and scenes that delighted me in the buoyancy and freshness of youth—that *elixir vitæ* which spreads a never-failing banquet before the eyes of its happy possessor.

Our commandant was General M——; the same ingenious officer whose original method of saving the colours of his regiment has appeared in a former chapter. He was not, perhaps, the cleverest officer in the service; but he was a worthy, good-tempered man, much beloved by all who were under his command.

One of the general's harmless hobbies was a fondness for lecturing the men of the different detachments, in a paternal tone, on their drunken and disorderly habits; assuring them that they would be excellent soldiers, were it not for their liquor-ish propensities.

"Recollect, my men," he would say, almost with tears in his eyes; "recollect, I tell you, that liquor is the rock upon which you split!"

Riding down to Newport, one day, he encountered several soldiers,

who had evidently been sacrificing to the jolly god. Some were laughing, singing, and jostling against each other; and some were making an echelon movement across the road, without much regard to time, step, or dressing.

Astounded at this monstrous state of affairs, the general rode up to the ringleader of the jovial squad, who happened to be an Irishman, and demanded, in an angry tone, what he and his companions had been about.

Pat immediately came to a stand, and, raising his hand to his cap with military precision, replied, in a tone of becoming humility,—

“Plaise your honor, we have been splitting on the rock !”

Music, both vocal and instrumental, was much cultivated at Albany Barracks; where we had a good amateur concert society, led by the *depôt* paymaster Knyvet, a member of a family at that time of much musical celebrity.

We had also a “lyrical club,” whose members gave parties in turn at their respective quarters; on which occasions they were bound to contribute songs of their own composition to the general stock.

These military *noctes*, though not so famous as the *noctes ambrosianæ*, were productive of much fun and festivity; and the numerous original compositions contributed by the members, many of whom are now general officers in the service, would fill a very amusing volume. From these, I shall select one contributed by myself, and the introduction of which to the club was marked by a serio-comic incident that afforded many a hearty laugh, when the fright which it occasioned was happily forgotten.

It being my turn to entertain the club, consisting of about thirty officers of all ranks, the prime spirits of the *depôt*, we met at my lodgings in Newport, where we sat down to a comfortable supper, it being desirable to lay a solid foundation for such orgies as might be set forth in the night’s programme.

Being bound for the “Golden Chersonese,” I thought it would be characteristic to introduce mullikatauny and curry; which, with the ducks and green pease, the beefsteaks, cutlets, pigeon pies, and all the other *et ceteras* of my bill of fare, were pronounced unexceptionable by very competent judges.

But greatly as they enjoyed these creature comforts, the eyes of all seemed irresistibly attracted from the good things before them to the contemplation of my side-board; not, however, by the splendour of my plate, with which at all times I have been very scantily furnished, but by the soldier-like appearance of two dozen large, square-shouldered Dutch-built bottles, drawn up in line by Terence O’Flinn, my new footman, with military precision, and admirably dressed from right to left.

These very attractive magnums were full to the stopper of most excellent “moonshine,” our poetical name for Hollands, with which popular tippie “the Island” was then plentifully supplied by smugglers, whose proceedings courted more the “pale glimpses of the moon,” than the “garish eye of day.”

When the rage of hunger was repressed, as Homer has it, and Terence had divested the festal board of the fragments of the feast,

he placed four of the magnums on the table, at equal distances, with the usual concomitants of hot and cold water, lemons, sugar, &c., and left us to our poetical enjoyments. There was, of course, wine for all who preferred it, but a vast majority chose the Schiedam, which was pronounced superexcellent.

After a few of our most popular lyrics had been sung by their respective composers, I was called upon for my contribution, which, with becoming modesty, I gave as follows:—

THE ARMY DEPÔT.*

I.

I can't for my life tell the cause of this stuff,
 About marching, and fasting, and fighting, and glory;
 We all have had fighting and fasting enough,
 And shall flourish, no doubt, in the bright page of story.
 In a snug barrack-room
 We now banish gloom,
 As by the fireside we belabour the foe;
 Secure from a scar,
 We encourage the war,
 At Albany Barracks, the army depôt.

II.

Here we've music, and moonshine, and high-foaming bowls,
 And cards, and tea-parties, and routs without number;
 And balls, where the ladies show off, pretty souls!
 While with gauze their fair bosoms they scorn to encumber.
 Thus all *débonnaire*,
 We kick away care,
 Each moment more social and happy we grow:
 In your sleeve you may laugh,
 When you get on the staff,
 Of Albany Barracks, the army depôt.

III.

Sweet Vectis! of England the garden renown'd!
 Though always luxuriant, thou never wert wild:
 No man was a hermit where no woman frown'd;
 No swain sigh'd in vain where the ladies all smiled.
 Thy daughters so fair,
 So artless, so rare,
 So neat, smart, and graceful, from top to the toe!
 Good-natured and gay,
 Drive old Care far away
 From Albany Barracks, the army depôt.

IV.

Here, cheerful and social, where no one offends,
 Each thought, word, and act will submit to reflection;
 Round Pleasure's gay banner we rally like friends,
 Drawn close by the bands of esteem and affection.
 And our good Commandant
 Every favour will grant,
 To make this fine current in harmony flow:
 Polite, mild, and kind,
 He rules o'er the mind,
 At Albany Barracks, the army depôt.

* This song was written by the late Captain William Rafter, of the 60th, or King's royal rifles.

V.

Whenever by duty's imperious decree,
 I'm forced to relinquish this charming communion,
 My body may rove, but my heart, no more free,
 I will leave as a hostage of future reunion,
 From the garden when driven,
 I'll look back on Heaven,
 Like grandfather Adam, reluctant to go ;
 And part, with a tear,
 From the circle so dear,
 At Albany Barracks, the army dépôt !

Three distinct rounds of applause repaid my willing labours, and compliments innumerable were showered on my blushing muse. My health was toasted in bumpers of Schiedam, and the president declared I was the most promising recruit that had yet joined the "Albany Lyrical Club."

In short, my gratification was unbounded, and I began already to feel those incipient yearnings for poetic fame which so often lead young scribblers into the swamps and quagmires that surround the base of Parnassus, when a gentle knock was heard at the door of the drawing-room where we held our symposium.

"Come in !" I cried, thinking it was my landlady's servant, with some complimentary message from her mistress, who must have overheard our minstrelsy, and had, doubtless, the good taste to appreciate my superior effusion.

But the door opened and admitted two men, utter strangers to me, and who might certainly be classed as very queer-looking fellows. They approached my chair without ceremony, and one of them addressed me as follows :—

"Mayhap you don't know me, Muster Blake ; but my name is Jeremiah Snap, and I'm a hoffer of excise, sir."

"Well," I boldly exclaimed, though rather startled at the announcement, "what have you to do with me, my good fellow ?"

"Not much for the present time, sir," replied Mr. Snap, with a sardonic grin ; "but I'm hobbogated to seize them there bottles of Skydam ; and 'tain't onlikely as how the commissioners may require you to account for having um in your possession."

"What d——d impertinence is this ?" I exclaimed, starting up in a very blustering mood. "How dare you, sir, come into my house without my permission ?"

"You bid me come in," said Mr. Snap, with a wink at his respectable companion ; "didn't he, Jim ?"

"I'll take my Bible hoath of it !" said Jim.

"I'll not stand this nonsense, by heavens !" I exclaimed ; "quit the room instantly, or I'll kick you downstairs."

"Pitch the rascals out of the window !" cried two or three young members of the club ; and up they jumped, very well inclined to put their threat into execution.

"I say, Jim," bellowed Mr. Snap, "you jest run off for the po-lice, you'll find 'em round the corner at Snags's ; and I'll stay to see that these here coves don't make away with them there bottles."

"Stop, stop !" cried our president, in a voice of authority ; "let us

have no violence in this matter. There is no occasion whatever for the police. I know Mr. Snap very well, and I'm quite sure he's a gentleman."

"Thank you, colonel," said Mr. Jeremiah; "I knows you too, sir, and I'm sure you'll give these young gen'lemen good advice, sir."

"Yes, yes," said the president, "all shall be settled amicably. The fact is, Mr. Snap, that there is, as you say, a small matter of 'moonshine' here; but only just enough for this evening's drinking; and I pledge my word there won't be a vestige of it in the morning. Now, come, we are all men of honour, and not a soul amongst us will blab; here are two guineas—good night to you, and say no more about it."

"Impossible, sir!" exclaimed Jeremiah, throwing himself into an attitude of virtuous indignation, as his eye glanced from the two guineas to the four-and-twenty bottles all in a row.

"Well! but consider," said the colonel.

"Quite impossible, sir," persisted Jeremiah. "Never did sich a thing in all my life; did I ever, Jim?"

"Never, on my Bible hoath," replied Jim.

The incorruptible virtue of the excise officer threw us all into a quandary; not for the loss of the Schiedam, which was a trifle, as I had wine, brandy, and whisky in abundance, for the night's consumption; but whispers now began to circulate of the expense and trouble of custom-house prosecutions, as well as the absolute jeopardy in which our commissions might be placed, if matters were pushed to extremities against us. It was said that smuggling had recently been carried to so daring a pitch in the island, owing to the extraordinary demand for gin amongst the troops, that the commissioners were determined to make a striking example the very first opportunity that offered; and, as Old Nick would have it, there could not be a better one than the present.

Taken, as we were, in *flagrante delicto*, with those damnable Dutch bottles staring us in the face, paraded with such brainless vanity by Mr. Terence O'Flinn, on whom we vented "curses not loud, but deep," we had no other resource than bribery to relieve us from our dilemma. The dogged Mr. Snap, however, was so outrageously true to his trust as to refuse all our offers, though we trebled and quadrupled the original figure; and, with a stern virtue that would have done honour to an old Roman, he insisted on carrying off his prize. This, indeed, we could now no otherwise prevent than by having recourse to violence, and thus making the matter a thousand times worse.

With heavy hearts, therefore, we saw the virtucus Jeremiah and his conscientious myrmidon make preparations to transfer our four-and-twenty bottles of exquisite Hollands from our supper-room to the custom-house. Never did the "Albany Lyrical Club" suffer such a heavy blow and great discouragement. In blank stupidity, we looked at one another; the most eloquent amongst us as mute as stock-fish, in fearful anticipation of arrests, courts-martial, and custom-house prosecutions, in *secula seculorum*.

But what vexed me more bitterly than all the rest, was to see the cause of our calamity—the military puppy, Mr. Terence O'Flinn, who had so ostentatiously exposed his whole line to the fire of the enemy,

instead of exerting his wit to counteract that enemy, actually assisting him to complete his conquest. For instance, Mr. Snap being puzzled how to carry off his seizure all at once, not deeming it advisable to make several trips for that purpose, the rascal Terence solved the difficulty in a trice, by saying,—

“Sure, there’s a fine large clothes-basket downstairs that will carry ’em all at wanst for you, Mr. Snap.”

“Thank you, my good fellow,” said Jeremiah; “do bring it up, and I’ll give you something for your trouble.”

Terence ran down, and soon reappeared with the basket; but not satisfied with this audacious piece of treachery, he actually assisted in packing up the bottles, as if he was doing the most praiseworthy action in the world.

“That’s the scoundrel that betrayed you,” said one of the young fellows near me.

“Not a doubt of it,” I replied; “but I’ll pay him out for it before long.”

“Now then, Jim,” said Mr. Snap, when all the bottles were stowed away, “take the basket on your shoulder carefully, and we’ll wish the gen’lemen good night.”

This was said with an affectation of civility, and a leer of vulgar triumph that drove me distracted.

The basket was accordingly placed upon Jim’s shoulder, with the assistance of my rascal Terence, who was so cursedly officious, that I could have knocked his head and the wall together.

“Take care av yourself, my man,” said Terence, “and mind how you go down; the stairs is dark, and some of the steps is slippery.”

“Yes, yes,” replied Jim; “I knows what I’m about. This here ain’t the first time we’ve done the swells out of their Skydam.”

“Stand away from below!” shouted Terence. “Sure, af the honest man was to slip, he’d dhrown ye all in blue blazes!”

“Thank you, my worthy fellow,” said Mr. Snap; “I’ll recollect your civility; and if you call on me next week, you shall have a drop of beer for it.”

Terence was duly grateful for this exuberant generosity on the part of Jeremiah; and the latter, turning to us, exclaimed, with a smile of insolent triumph,—

“I wish you all a good evening, gen’lemen, and hopes you’ll excuse —Oh criki! what the devil is that?”

A deafening peal of laughter succeeded the horrible crash which had caused Mr. Jeremiah’s exclamation; for Terence, watching his opportunity, had given the basket a tip, and down it went to the bottom. The four-and-twenty square-shouldered bottles were smashed in a thousand fragments on the stone floor of the passage; and before ten minutes had elapsed, not a thimbleful of their contents could be saved as evidence of our smuggling propensities.

The crest-fallen Jeremiah sneaked off like a dog that has stolen a bone and expects to be well kicked for it; and we entered into a subscription on the spot to present Mr. Terence O’Flinn with a silver watch for his ingenuity and presence of mind.

CHAPTER XLVI.

LIFE IN AN INDIAMAN.

THE order for embarkation at length appeared, and I made preparations accordingly for the gorgeous East; laying in a stock of seven or eight dozen shirts, with all other articles of wearing apparel in proportion, to the great astounding of my servant, who seriously asked me if officers kept shop when they went over there to India to sell shirts, trousers, and all other hardware.

As the spring fleet of the Bombay and China ships then lay at Spithead, I embarked from Ryde with a detachment of fifty men, and soon found myself on board the *Cumberland*, a fine vessel of 1,500 tons burthen, mounting thirty-six guns, with a miscellaneous crew of 150 men, including a good many Chinese and Hindoo Lascars. I was received with every civility and attention by the second officer, who commanded *pro tem.*, and speedily installed in a fine, capacious cabin, which I shared with a cornet of the 17th Light Dragoons.

Our fleet consisted of five large Indiamen, under convoy of the *Seringapatam* frigate; and as Blue Peter was flying at the foretop of the latter, everything was in a state of bustle and preparation for a long passage. The decks were constantly crowded with soldiers and soldiers' wives, and passengers with their servants and luggage, intermingled with sea-stock, which comprised a couple of cows, with numerous sheep, pigs, geese, turkeys, ducks, &c. &c., the whole contributing their utmost efforts to the general noise and confusion that prevailed in this modern ark of all created things.

Two or three days, however, sufficed to shake every one down into their proper places; and the commodore, having loosed his foretop-sail and fired a gun, the capstan was manned, the drums and fifes mustered on the forecastle, and, amidst the inspiring strains of the "Girl I left behind me," the men gave way on the bars with their joyous circular tramp till the slack of the cable was hove in. Then the chief mate, or first officer, as he is styled, who was pacing backwards and forwards on the poop, shouted through his speaking-trumpet:—

"Belay all that! Mr. Ripley, man the whip there."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied Mr. Ripley, second officer, who commanded in the waist, and who issued the necessary orders to his subordinates.

The men appointed for this particular duty having overhauled the rigging of the whip, that comfortable mode of ascent, manufactured out of a rum puncheon, and decorated with several of the ship's flags, was immediately lowered into the captain's launch, which had just come alongside.

We all sprang to the hammock-nettings, to see what Providence had sent us in a female form worth looking at, for as yet we had been nothing in the shape of a lady passenger but a couple of officers'

wives, rather *passées*, but otherwise chatty and agreeable enough. When I say that we had a passage of three or four months before us, the reader will readily understand how anxiously we looked forward to some *compagnons de voyage* of that sex and age which alone can dissipate the dulness of time, and gild even monotony itself with unwonted splendour.

Captain Wilkinson, a very gentlemanly, nice fellow, by the way, having ascended the ship's side, stood ready to receive two ladies who had come with him. The first of these was the wife of Colonel Oddy, of the Company's service, a pleasant, good-natured, lady-like person, who smiled around upon all, as if to give assurance of continued fair weather from that quarter, at least: but how shall I describe the second,—a young lady who was making her first trip to India under Mrs. Oddy's protection?

Picture to yourself, gentle reader, a blonde of the purest and most delicate tint, with a profusion of light auburn ringlets, and eyes of melting blue, the certain indications of a tender and affectionate heart: an elegant figure, somewhat inclined to *embonpoint*, a graceful step and carriage, and a charming affability, which won the involuntary love of all. Picture this to yourself, and you will have something like a semblance of Julia Monson.

Every one who could get a look at this fair vision as she passed on to the poop cabins seemed pleasingly struck with her appearance: for my part, I was fascinated, entranced, rapt in a soft Elysium of admiration and delight. I know not how it is, but love seems to be the natural foundation of my character; for, though I have had a fair share of fighting, I cannot say that I ever felt so much pleasure in the latter as in the former; or, perhaps, I should rather say that the fierce excitement of the one never yielded me the exquisite enjoyment of the other.

However this may be, as I am no splitter of metaphysical hairs, or profound searcher into the mysterious idiosyncrasy of the human heart, it will be sufficient to say, that even this slight and single glance of Julia Monson sealed my destiny for ever, as I then imagined. But, though I shall possibly suffer in the opinion of my fair readers for the facility with which I appear to have transferred my affections from one to another, they must do me the justice to admit that I never made choice of a new love until the old one was irrevocably lost to me by some stern decree of fate, which seemed determined that I should never be fixed to any one in particular, but to veer eternally to every point of the female compass.

Some sensualists there are who excuse their versatility by the distich of the poet, that

“When we are far from the lips that we love,
We have but to make love to the lips we are near.”

I am, however, by no means such a materialist as to be influenced by this heretical doctrine. On the contrary, so far from wishing to cast off the chains I have proudly worn for my early loves, I still cherish their memories with the most lively affection, and fancy that, in every fresh phase of my amorous existence, I but make a renewal

of my affection to the same angelic being, in a new and somewhat different form, that first inspired me with the tender passion.

But the anchor's a-peak, and we are off down Channel. Sweet Vectis is melting in the distance, and Boreas is blustering in our rigging; while ever and anon he takes the ruffian billows by their foamy tops and dashes them along our reeking decks in showers of spray, that send the fresh-water sailors dripping to their cabins. I, more accustomed to the rude element, with forage-cap strapped under my chin, and Spanish *capa* wrapped in many folds around me, pace the quarter-deck, backwards and forwards, with the officer of the watch, spinning yarn for yarn with the sea-going monster, and peering curiously into the cuddy windows, not by any means so much attracted by the savoury preparations therein going forward, as by a longing hope to catch a glimpse of this new star of my destiny.

But Julia, lovely, inexorable maid! was invisible, and I was obliged to submit to the succedaneum of an excellent dinner, which was now announced by drum and fife, in the good old fashion.

Our table extended the whole width of the cuddy, that is, of the ship's beam; all but the space allotted to a couple of 18-pounders on each side, their muzzles being presented to the lowering sea and sky, and their breeches to the company. The latter was by no means so numerous as I expected, for several of the passengers, and most of the young "soldier officers," writers, and cadets, were *hors de combat*; while we, who were callous to nautical calamities, were left to the enjoyment of a banquet more than sufficient for thrice our number.

At the head of the table sat the captain, with his pleasant smiling countenance, and at the bottom, old Cole, the chief mate, or first officer, with his little cunning bead-like eyes, looking out for a fresh victim at chicken-hazard. Both did the honours with much urbanity to their new guests; though a heavy lurch would now and then upset a toureen of pea-soup, or send an avalanche of knives, forks, and shattered crystal into the lap of some luckless Griffin.

It came on to blow great guns as we got into the chops of the Channel, and matters were not much improved when we found ourselves amidst the mountain billows of the Bay of Biscay. A dreary silence meanwhile pervaded the poop cabins, whose inmates seemed to have given up the ghost altogether: indeed, I began at last to fancy that no such person as Julia Monson really existed, but that my eyes must have been deceived by some bodiless creation of a distempered brain; or else that some flitting sea-nymph had been amusing an idle moment at my expense.

I had nothing for it, therefore, but to plunge, as a *pis-aller*, into those gastronomic enjoyments which seem, indeed, to be the sole blessings of a long voyage: *per esempio*, at eight o'clock A.M. we had an excellent breakfast of pork chops, mutton chops, ham and eggs, fried fish, hot rolls, tea, coffee, chocolate, &c.; at twelve, we had biscuit, Stilton, Parmesan, pale ale, and Madeira; at two, an elegant and abundant dinner, with so many shore luxuries that no one could fancy that we were in the midst of the Atlantic. At six o'clock, tea was served, with many of the breakfast accompaniments; and at nine,

a capital supper of cold meat, broiled bones, devilled turkeys, roasted potatoes, malt, grog, punch, &c. Sancho himself never had greater reason to be satisfied with the wedding of Camacho; for the cuddy table was, in short, one continuous scene of eating and drinking, one meal being no sooner despatched than preparations were made for another.

Julia, however, the sun of my existence, had not yet illuminated our horizon, for the weather was still rough, and the ship rolled and plunged heavily, keeping our decks in a constant deluge of spray, while our view was bounded by vapoury clouds, through which our other ships looked like spectral edifices of ropes and spars, showing their very keels occasionally on the crest of a mountain wave, as if on the very point of toppling over.

Even I, though I always loved the battling of the elements, would often weary of the sameness, and retire to my cabin, which rarely had occasion for dead-lights, while others were involved in darkness. There, while my young companion of the 17th amused himself with hook and line catching mackerel, noddies, Mother Cary's chickens, and other aquatic birds and fish that followed in the wake of the ship, I endeavoured to give expression to my thoughts and feelings through the medium of my flute; and once or twice I was gratified by something like a responsive strain overhead, a light and graceful touch on the piano, accompanied by a voice of simple pathos and natural melody. Oh, Julia!

We at length got into the latitude of the Western Islands, and the St. Michael's boats came off with fruit, fish, and other insular luxuries; while, the weather being warm and moderate, our lady-birds began to show upon the quarter-deck. Then, indeed, I had my fill of love; for, though Julia was the cynosure of all eyes, and the magnet that attracted every heart, yet my attentions were so incessant, my assiduities so marked, that, before we reached Madeira, my position was pretty well defined as the favoured beau of the lovely passenger.

One great advantage I had over my rivals was music, of which Julia was passionately fond: and as she played and sang with taste and expression, the accompaniment of my flute was always welcome of an evening, when the ship was going steadily with a gentle breeze abaft the beam; while the very air of those balmy latitudes was redolent of all-pervading love.

At Madeira, as the ships lay-to for a whole day, to take on board the usual stock of wine for India, and the London market, Mrs. Oddy availed herself of the opportunity to make a little party for shore, and I had the good fortune to be included in it; for, though Mrs. Oddy knew perfectly well that I should be outbidden in the Indian market, yet she had a tender bosom, that felt for the yearnings of young hearts like ours. We spent a delightful day at Funchal and its lovely vicinity, where, having visited several sequestered retreats of nuns and friars, from whom we purchased a variety of nic-nacs, pretty souvenirs, of no intrinsic value, we returned on board in the evening. The vessels then filled their sails, and we stood our course, due south, and by east, easterly; the African coast, as the reader knows, trending away in that direction.

Our little excursion ashore had afforded me many opportunities of evincing the warmth of my affection for Julia, and of receiving from her a sweet encouragement of my suit. We soon became inseparable; and getting into the trade-winds, when the ships went almost motionless before the breeze, and for weeks together had no occasion to stir tack or sheet, we spent the long pleasant day on the deck together, walking, chatting, or reading beneath an ample awning, while the evening closed in with music and dancing. On these occasions, I sang *seguidillas* for Julia, which she accompanied very prettily on the guitar; and I danced the Bolero and Fandango for her with the castanets;—sometimes burlesquing those picturesque dances to a degree that made her laugh till she cried. Thus, every day added to the freedom of our intercourse, and the fervency of our love, as we proceeded on our voyage, laughing, singing, and dancing; the captain pleasant and good-humoured, as usual; the ship's officers obliging and attentive; the passengers becoming more amiable every day, the more nearly we approached the termination of our voyage; and old Cole, the chief mate, pigeoning the young writers and cadets, as usual, in his cabin at chicken-hazard.

But we met, of course, with the usual casualties incidental to long voyages. For instance, our maintop was struck with lightning one day, and blazed out with alarming fury; on another we were deluged by the bursting of a waterspout, which set us all floating in our cabins. Then we had several dreadful gales of wind, which put a stop to cooking for days together; and as many still more dreadful calms; being forced to take shelter from the one in Simon's Bay, and patiently to endure the other, like "the Ancient Mariner." Finally, when in the latitude of Bourbon and the Isle of France, we had to clear twice for action; but, on both occasions, the French cruisers, which had caused the alarm, kept a respectful distance, and showed each a fair pair of heels when our gallant frigate bore down upon them, under a towering cloud of canvas, gracefully skimming the surface of the subject main.

CHAPTER XLVII.

LONG CROKER OF OURS.

At length, after a favourable passage of three months and twenty days, we came in sight of the celebrated dowry of the infanta Donna Catalina, the far-famed island of Bombay; and as we approached the picturesque shores of the beautiful inlet from which it derives its name, sailing by the hanging woods and cavern-temples of Elephanta, and skirting the lofty mountains of the Mahratta shore, we hailed with delight this first appearance of the gorgeous East, and revelled in fancied joys and golden anticipations.

It was barely six o'clock A.M. when we neared the shore; but all was life and bustle. The placid bosom of the bay was crowded with vessels of every description, from the lofty Indiaman down to the

lumbering patamar and the unsophisticated fishing-boat; while the somewhat turbid water, which succeeded the deep blue of the ocean, seemed alive with large snakes winding lazily about, as if basking in the sunshine. This imparted a character to the scenery more novel than attractive; but when the native boats came alongside, and we were boarded in every direction by crowds of dubashes, maty-boys, durgees, doby-wallas, *et hoc genus omne*, all eagerly seeking employment, and soliciting "master's" patronage, we felt ourselves indeed in a new world, that received us with open arms, winning smiles, and a profusion of luxuries; altogether unlike the cold and churlish indifference we had been accustomed to in our own phlegmatic regions.

Every preparation being made for immediate landing, our *parti de voyage* now bade each other a friendly adieu, and Julia and I separated with fervent vows of everlasting affection. The 17th Light Dragoons being somewhere in the Guzerat, the officers and men of that regiment on board were to take up their quarters for the present in the fort; the cadets were all taken charge of by the sergeant-major of the Company's European regiment; the young writers and other passengers had generally some confidential peon, or servant of their friends on shore, to marshal them the way; while a quarter-master sergeant of my regiment soon found me out, and gave me the unpleasing intelligence that the battalion, having been at the capture of the Isle of France, had sailed thence to Madras, and was soon after included in the expedition to Java, under Sir Samuel Auchmuty. There was now, he said, nothing but a detachment of invalids, with all the women of the regiment, left at Bombay, under the charge of a major and one subaltern.

The sergeant's intelligence was a considerable damper to my anticipated enjoyment; but I lost no time in getting my men into the boats provided for them, and soon arrived at the bunder, or pier-head. There we had to bustle through bales of merchandise, piles of teakwood, palanquins, hackeries, elephants, camels, and various other impediments, peculiar to a place of such extensive commerce; while crowds of Parsees, Arabs, Hindoos, Chinese, &c., stunned our ears with their multifarious jargons. Under the guidance of our sergeant, however, we at length got clear of all these obstacles, and proceeded without further interruption towards our destination.

This was Colabah, or Old Woman's Island, the southern extremity of what may now be called the peninsula of Bombay; a level piece of arid rock and sandy soil, which is itself insulated at high water; and where some regiments and detachments were cantoned in very unsophisticated barracks, built of cocoanut-trees and bamboos, and roofed with *cadjans*, a species of rude matting made of the leaves of the former. After an hour's march, nearly, we arrived at our cantonment, where, having delivered over my detachment to the sergeant-major, I said to my conductor,—

"Well, Sergeant Jamieson, what is become of your officers? I have not seen one of them yet."

"Weel, sir," replied Jamieson, "the major, ye ken, has just stepped over to Elephanta with a party, to see the caves, not ex-

pecting the ships would come in the day; but the leeftenant is not far awa."

"Then show me to his quarters," I said, "for I am confoundedly peckish, and shall be glad of a good breakfast."

"Hech, sir," cried Jamieson, with a smile, "ye'll be jest in time then for a bonny griskin."

"A what?" I demanded.

But the sergeant stepped out, and replied not; I could see, however, by his manner that there was some mystery in the case.

In two or three minutes we arrived at the *compound* of Lieutenant Croker; a somewhat elevated piece of rocky soil, overlooking the sea, and crowned with a few straggling cocoanut-trees, the infinitesimal roots of which seemed scarcely connected with the arid bed from which they sprang. The *compound* was surrounded by a low hedge of milk-bush, which seemed rather destined to define its limits, than to defend it from the incursions of sundry pigs, pariah-dogs, and naked black children of both sexes, who ran backwards and forwards through its numerous gaps, shouting, grunting, barking, and tumbling over each other, with the most amusing hilarity and good fellowship.

In the centre of this Indian estate stood the lieutenant's bungalow, a square building of the most unpretending simplicity; its walls being formed of four sturdy cocoanut-trees at the angles, which were connected by diagonal bamboos; and these were covered with *cadjans*, impervious to the sun at least, if not to the wind and rain. The roof was formed in a similar manner, and the front of the building was decorated with an equally light and graceful verandah; while the floor was formed of *chunam*, an excellent cement made of burnt sea-shells, and which, when properly wrought, bears a polish like Parian marble.

In spite of its rude architecture and rough materials, there was an air of lightness, coolness, and comfort about this bungalow that struck me forcibly; but what still more attracted my observation was a dead pig that lay on a table in front of the building. It had evidently just been killed; the hair was scalded off, the stomach opened and cleaned, and sundry incisions made, *secundum artem*, in the body, by a very tall, gaunt young man, who, with his shirt-sleeves tucked up to his shoulder, stood by the table, brandishing a huge butcher's knife, which he alternately sharpened on his steel and buried in the body of the pig, not only with a perfect knowledge of, but an excessive enjoyment in, all the mysteries of the slaughtering art.

"If you please, Leeftenant Croker," said my conductor, "here is Leeftenant Blake just arrived from England."

"Oh, Jupiter!" exclaimed the amateur butcher, making a rush at me, as if about to slaughter me also; "I am happy to see you, Percy Blake:" here he shook me tremendously by the hand. "I have heard of you from Jack Dillon," he continued. "I know you of old—blown up at Rodrigo—capital shot, eh!—duck-gun, or rifle—single or double—but I'll show you the sport, my boy!—I'll show you a jungle that will astonish your weak nerves, and make you wish yourself up to your neck in your father's horsepond."

Thus he ran on, shaking me heartily by the hand all the time, as if really glad to see me; and occasionally interrupting himself with such exclamations as these:—

"I say, you Chouree Mootoo, wallop them pigs out of the *compound*, and tell Gungee and Paupee, if they don't keep their brats at home, I'll cut 'em up like pork. By Jupiter! there's Juno running off with the pig's croobeens! Knock her down with the mallet, Rungapa!—you thief of the world, you have missed the dog, and killed one of the children!—Oh, Jupiter! what a shinty we'll have, when Gungy hears you've squashed her brat—there, gather him up, and throw him over the milk-hedge, or we'll have a court of inquiry, and all the rest of the balderdash, for manslaughtering a little black bastard!"

Sergeant Jamieson here dropped a hint that I had not yet breakfasted.

"I'm glad to hear it," replied this original. "I'll give him a griskin that's better than curry, pillau, and all the rest of the balderdash. Oh! you haven't been to head-quarters yet? You haven't seen Purseram Bhow?"

"Who is Purseram Bhow?" I asked.

"Oh, by Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "You don't know who Purseram Bhow is! You'll soon know enough of him, my boy; won't he, Jamieson?"

"Aweel, sir," replied the cautious Scot, "I think it vara likely he may."

"Come along, then," said Croker; "breakfast will be ready in a jiffy. Chouree Mootoo, is the table laid?"

"Ho, sahib," replied Chouree Mootoo.

"Clap us down a couple of nice griskins," said Croker. "I'll come and give them a touch of Cayenne when they're beginning to brown. You Rungapa—"

"Master please?" said the maty-boy.

"Go," said Croker, "and sweep out all the snakes, scorpions, and centipedes; and get a couple of chillums ready for after breakfast."

"Ho, sahib," said the maty-boy, as he scampered off to obey orders.

"Joe Ingram," said Croker, to a military assistant in the slaughtering department, "take that pig's head to the major; and a nice loin to the quarter-master's lady, and a hind-quarter to Mrs. Paymaster, with my salaam; we'll corn the rest. And, Ingram, you may tell the sergeant-major I have excused you from knapsack drill for the next fortnight."

"He says I must make up my guards, sir," interrupted Ingram, "for them two nights I was out in the jungle with your honour."

"That's more of the balderdash," replied Croker. "'Tis Purseram Bhow put that in his head, because he doesn't like me to be absent from quarters; but tell him he must always return you on fatigue when you're with me. Tell the quarter-master sergeant to give you a bottle of rum on my account; and now for breakfast, Percy, my boy—Rungapa, let out the dogs—Choreday, choreday!" *

Then forth rushed a dozen dogs of all breeds and sizes, from an outhouse where the noisy pack had hitherto been confined; and up they jumped upon Croker and me with devouring fondness and delight. Polygar, lurcher, retriever, pointer, spaniel, terrier, and bulldog; frisking, barking, yelping, and coursing each other, in and out of the bungalow, and round the compound, like so many mad things; and thus accompanied we entered the *salle-à-manger* of my new friend.

The maty-boy had just swept out the snakes, scorpions, and centipedes, but I still thought I could detect a few crawling about here and there; while an occasional rustling in the roof overhead—for the room had no ceiling—and a sparkling eye peeping out between the cadjans, indicated the presence of a lurking snake or two. The breakfast, however, was excellent; for, besides the promised griskin, we had a capital prawn curry, and some of those dear little gelatinous fish called Dungaree ducks. Our real China tea and our Mocha coffee were sweetened with sugar-candy—an improvement certainly on our European loaf-sugar; and nothing could be more exquisite, if a large, green, flying bug did not occasionally flounce into the teacup, and render it undrinkable.

“You Rungapa,” said Croker to his maty-boy, “take a pellet-bow, and shoot those rascals.”

“Ho, sahib,” replied Rungapa, taking down one of the bows from the wall, against which several were hanging; and, as he adjusted a clay pellet to the string, I looked round, to see if any more “little black bastards” were doomed to death; when, swoop! through one of the windows rushed a crow, seized a fine thick slice of bread-and-butter which I held in my hand, and flew out of the door like a flash of lightning.

“Ha, ha, ha!” shouted Croker, “that fellow would know a griffin a mile off.”

The sable felon, however, had not flown so fast, but that a pellet from Rungapa’s bow struck him right under the wing; knocked a shower of feathers from his body, and the bread-and-butter from his bill; which was caught, ere it touched the earth, by another of the fraternity, who bore off the prize in triumph.

When we had discussed enough of the solids and fluids, a couple of hookahs were set down on neat Persian carpets behind us; and the silver mouth-piece of the long tube being gently insinuated into my right hand by Chouree Mootoo, who, in addition to his many other employments, was hookah-burdar for the nonce, I then, for the first time, enjoyed the luxury of a chillum; so superior in every respect to our barbarous European methods of inhaling the fragrance of the meditative leaf.

“Oh, Jupiter!” my host suddenly exclaimed, “here is Tom Tchute. Come on, you limping rascal, and shave me.”

Here entered a little elderly native, who not only limped, but squinted awfully; looking, as Croker remarked, a dozen ways to cheat the devil. He was attired in the ordinary Hindoo costume, all perfectly white and clean; with large gold earrings, several silver rings on his toes, and a huge roll of white muslin round his waist, in

which were stuck sundry razors, hones, and razor-strops, the implements of his calling. He entered with a quick jerking motion, stropping a razor all the while, as if anxious to make the most of his time; and his little sparkling eyes shot rapid glances across his nose, as if in eager search of some object he either couldn't find or couldn't shun. Croker said the latter was the case; for that his contract with Old Nick had nearly expired, and he was now looking out for a bolt.

Tom, who was surnamed Tehute, from a peculiar branch of his trade, lathered and shaved my friend Croker in a very masterly and artistic manner; replying in monosyllables, or short caustic phrases, to all the taunts and questions of his equally original employer. He also performed a similar operation on my chin, and when he had finished, Croker said,—

"You had better shampoo him, Tom."

"Spouse master like," replied Tom.

"What is shampooing?" I asked.

"The most delightful operation you can imagine," replied Croker.

"Isn't it, Tom?"

"Some like, some not like," said Tom. "Young griffin sahib not know what good for him."

"Well," I said, "proceed with your operation. I am ready."

Tom then began to knead the upper part of my body gently with his knuckles, as if he had so much dough under his plastic hands; this he would every now and then accompany with a smart slap on some muscular part, pressing and slightly pinching the flesh; his fingers still in rapid and perpetual motion, flying from one place to another; imparting, not a tickling, but a tingling sensation to nerves and fibres that was far from unpleasant, and producing a sleepy tendency, which he would suddenly dispel by an unexpected cracking of all my knuckles. Then he would resume the kneading process; occasionally pulling me by the ears, and rubbing with his smooth, soft hand the muscles of the neck and shoulders, till he found I was again subsiding into a dozy state; when he gave my head such a sudden jerk, that I thought he had actually caused a dislocation of the vertebræ.

"You infernal villain!" I exclaimed, starting up; "you have broken my neck!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Croker. "By Jupiter, that's beautiful."

"Spouse master lie down a bit," said Tom very coolly, "him neck mend again."

I felt, indeed, an uncommon propensity for sleep at the moment; and, throwing myself on Croker's cane-bottomed couch, I fell into a delicious slumber, which lasted till tiffin-time, when I awoke wonderfully refreshed from the effects of this peculiarly Oriental operation.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE INDIAN LADY.

Soon after tiffin, which only differed from breakfast by the introduction of mulligatawny, and the substitution of wine and malt liquor for tea and coffee, I felt an unconquerable desire to see my dearly beloved Julia again; for, although a few short hours only had elapsed since we parted, it seemed to me like an age. I therefore requested Croker to send one of his boys to get me a palanquin while I dressed.

"Oh, Jupiter! where are you going to," demanded Croker, "at this hour of the day, when nobody stirs out unless they want a stroke of the sun?"

"I am going to the commissary-general's," I replied.

"The commissary-general!" exclaimed Croker. "What do you want with him?"

"Nothing at all with him," I replied; "but I want to see his niece, a charming girl with whom I came out in the *Cumberland*."

"Whew!" exclaimed Croker, with something between a whistle and an interjection. "Is that the way the land lies? Then, by Jupiter, you shall have the handsomest palanquin in all Bombay."

He accordingly despatched an emissary for one of these vehicles, and I had just completed my toilette when it arrived. It was, in fact, a very handsome specimen of an Oriental carriage; light and graceful in its form, painted and varnished with great brilliancy, but perfect taste; with silver mountings, pale green satin furniture, humauls all dressed in snow-white tunics, trousers, and turbans; and a couple of chobdars in front, with ebony clubs, and silver pine-apple heads to them. I congratulated Chouree Mootoo on the good taste of his selection; and as I extended myself in this *ne plus ultra* of luxurious locomotion, Croker addressed the humauls:—

"You standy Burra Sahib Commissary-General in the fort?"

"Ho, sahib," was the reply, "we standy, we standy."

"Then," said Croker, "you take the Colonel Bahauder Sahib to say salaam to Commissary-General Sahib. You juldee jow, and you shall have cherry-merry."

"Acha, sahib," replied the humauls. "Colonel Sahib bhote burra Bahauder."

Off we accordingly set at a very brisk pace, the humauls keeping step admirably with the grunting sort of song peculiar to them; and in due time we entered the *porte cochère* of a splendid mansion in the fort, the chobdars shouting at the very top of their lungs, "Colonel Bahauder Sahib! Colonel Bahauder Sahib!"

I descended from the palanquin amidst a double row of sable domestics; all salaaming as I passed, and repeating from one to another, "Colonel Bahauder Sahib! Colonel Bahauder Sahib!" The announcement was caught up as I mounted a magnificent flight of stone steps; and was echoed and re-echoed through a suite of lofty

apartments, gorgeously furnished, by another double row of domestics; till the whole building rang again with "Colonel Bahauder Sahib! Colonel Bahauder Sahib!"

Thus I passed from one stately room to another; walking upon floors of such highly polished chunam, that the rich furniture, beautiful paintings, gold and china vases, or-moulu candelabra, and all the *et ceteras* of Oriental pomp and luxury, were reflected in them as in the purest mirrors. I felt, indeed, as if I was an unwarranted intruder on such fairy-like magnificence, and almost wished myself back again amidst Croker's snakes, scorpions, and centipedes: but I mentally repeated to myself my poor father's grand panacea for all sublunary trials,—“a light heart and a thin pair of breeches,”—and boldly pushed forward to see the adventure out.

At length, to my great relief, the chobdars ceased announcing “the Colonel Bahauder Sahib,” and I found myself alone in a gorgeous saloon, the furniture of which seemed to me to be all gold: sandal-wood cabinets, satin-wood chairs, sofas, and ottomans, covered with yellow silk damask furniture, upon which I was almost afraid to sit down: while the broiling sun was carefully excluded by gilt Venetians, that just shed a golden haze over the scene; and a broad *punkah* overhead was swayed gently to and fro by invisible agency, diffusing a delicious and odorous breeze throughout the apartment.

When I had sat here for some time, admiring over and over again everything that surrounded me, and contrasting this Oriental splendour with the bamboo shed of my friend Croker, I at length heard a rustling of silks and satins, and anticipated the pleasure of seeing my dear Julia in another moment. But I was disappointed: instead of the sylph-like figure, and lively, confiding manner of my mistress, a tall, stout, and stately lady, of a certain age, approached, with good but coarse features, and, as I thought, an air of vulgarity, in spite of her rich and fashionable Parisian dress, and the hundred-guinea Cashmere shawl that was thrown over her shoulders with studied negligence.

I made a very low bow to this somewhat formidable figure; but she received it with a gracious smile, and an inviting gesture to sit beside her on a very elegant *vis-à-vis* sofa; when, as she apparently expected me to open the conference, I said,—

“I have taken the liberty of calling to pay my respects to Miss Monson, after her voyage.”

“My niece,” she replied, “is highly honoured by your attention. Your visit has been announced to her, and she will be here presently.”

“This is delightful!” I mentally exclaimed. “How utterly free from pride these great people are in India! Here am I, a poor subaltern, received into a princely palace, as if I were the commander-in-chief himself.”

I made my acknowledgments to the stately lady of the mansion, and we entered into familiar chat about the sayings and doings of the mighty ones of the earth; which was maintained on my part with all the tact of which I was master, and no small share of invention to

supply my lack of knowledge. I was surprised, however, at the facility with which I imposed on my fair hostess; and this, with a few grammatical slips and other solecisms on her part, led me to conclude that, however she came to be enshrined in this golden temple, she was not altogether racy of the soil, and born to the manner.

"You have, of course," she observed, "mixed a great deal in the high society of the *metropolis*?"

"A good deal, madam," I replied, "during the very short periods that I have not been on foreign service."

"Then I suppose you have met with some members of our family in the *bo-munday*?" said the lady.

"I have met Lord Monson's family frequently," I said, "but I was not aware of the relationship."

"Oh, yes!" she said, the commissary-general of *the forces*" (thus she was pleased to designate her husband) "is first cousin to his lordship; and, indeed, if his lordship's sons *was* to die, he would be next heir to the title."

"This," said I to myself, "is indeed a remote contingency, all his lordship's sons being married, with large families."

"You haven't," she said, "fallen in *promiscuously*, at Windsor, or Carlton Palace, with my mamma, the dowager Mrs. Jenkinson, of Pentonville, a distant relation of the Liverpool family?"

"I cannot say I have had that honour," I replied; "but I certainly have seen a very distinguished personage in the royal antechamber, on a levée day, bearing a great resemblance to yourself and Lord Liverpool."

"Oh, you see the family likeness, then," she said. "You are probably acquainted with his lordship?"

"I have had the honour," I replied, "of meeting his lordship in the House of Peers."

"Oh, indeed!" she responded, "that was a great distinction; but officers of rank, to be sure, have many privileges that your tag-rag-and-bobtail subalterns can't pretend to."

This was a shot between wind and water that I was not prepared for, and I fear I looked foolish; but she rattled on:—

"You have, of course, attended the Prince Regent's drawing-rooms?"

"Oh, yes," I replied, "frequently;" for, like other fools, I had indeed often gone to see the company in their progress thither.

"My mamma," said the commissary-general's lady, "was not at the last, being *ill* disposed with the *fluenzar*. She was to have gone with Lord Islington's family, to whom she is nearly related. Do you know Islington?"

"Perfectly well," I replied, "especially the Angel Tavern."

Here, from some cause or other, it was the lady's turn to look foolish: she started, blushed, turned deadly pale, stammered—indeed, I thought she was going to faint. I couldn't imagine what had caused so sudden a commotion, but thought she must have been shocked at my vulgarity in mentioning such a place; for, as it afterwards turned out, her question had reference to her relation, Lord Islington, and

not to the snobbish suburb so called. This little incident, however, changed the conversation to other topics; and, seeing me look admiringly on two splendid Chinese jars, she said they were a present from the Emperor Ching Fo to the commissary-general of the forces. She also pointed my attention to a beautiful little cabinet of sandal-wood that perfumed the whole apartment, which was a present to herself from the emperor of Delhi.

"I must really show you the inside of it," she said, plunging her hand into her reticule. "But where on earth is my keys?"

I saw a small bunch lying on the floor, which I picked up and handed to her; at the same time suiting my eacology to the standard of her own, I said,—

"Is them they, madam?"

"Oh, thank you, colonel," she replied. "I'm quite vexed at your having the trouble."

"Colonel!" I mentally exclaimed; "can it then be possible that Croker's jest to the humauls has passed current upon this poor lady's credulity, and that I am indebted for all her condescension to my supposed military pre-eminence?"

This was mortifying to my personal vanity; but I determined not to clear up the mistake until, at least, I should see my dear Julia. I therefore continued to bear my blushing honours as if they really belonged to me, and lauded to the skies the house, furniture, dress, and ornaments of the commissary-general's lady, as she eloquently described to me every item; descanting, with the usual absurdity of *parvenus*, not only on the taste and beauty of the different articles, but also on their pecuniary value, and the large sums they had respectively cost the commissary-general of the forces.

I was evidently making a most favourable impression on my fair hostess, which I did not fail to improve by an occasional compliment to her personal charms, such as my countrymen are said to have a happy knack at improvising. In short, she seemed on the very point of inviting me to dinner, when Julia appeared at the door, swimming in at first in a very stately manner, till she saw who it was; then, with her usual frank familiarity, she ran up to me, exclaiming,—

"Oh, it's you, Percy Blake! I would have come sooner, but they told me it was Colonel Bothero, or some such name."

"Percy Blake!" cried the commissary-general's lady, starting from the sofa bolt upright, as if under the influence of a galvanic battery.

"Yes, aunt," replied the innocent Julia; "Mr. Blake that I told you of, who was so attentive to me on board that plaguy Indiaman that was always running into one mischief or another."

"Percy Blake!" reiterated the commissary-general's lady, actually stamping her foot with passion. "What, sir, are you not Colonel Bahauder?"

"No, madam," I replied. "By some mistake, for which I am not accountable, I have been announced here by a rank to which I have no title; but I assure you——"

"That's enough, sir," cried the commissary-general's lady, with a look of decided ferocity; "good morning to you. Come along, miss."

Here she took poor Julia by the arm, with as little ceremony as a hawk would use towards a pigeon, and dragged her out of the room, exclaiming as she went, "Percy Blake, indeed! - Marry-come-up, my country cousin!"

The scene was altogether so ludicrous that I threw myself down upon a sofa in a roar of unextinguishable laughter; from which I was at length roused by the entrance of a very stately dubash, who, marching up to me, said somewhat abruptly:—

"Your palkee wait, sahib."

"Very well," I said, "that will do, Chouree Mootoo."

"My name not Chouree Mootoo," he replied, sulkily; "my name Ramo Samee. Chouree Mootoo one Pariah name—not proper, sahib, call me Chouree Mootoo."

I walked up to Ramo Samee, with a look that boded him no good; of which he seemed so convinced himself, that he turned about, and vanished with amazing celerity. I then very leisurely retraced my steps through the gorgeous apartments into which I had so unwarrantably intruded; and, seating myself in my palanquin, was borne back to the stony desert of Colabah, where the recital of my adventure elicited from Croker such a guffaw as must have been heard at Mazagong and Malabar Point.

Croker and I dined that evening at the mess of the 65th, where we heard the history of Mrs. Commissary-General Monson; the most remarkable feature of which appeared to be, that her mother had been a pastrycook; and she herself was barmaid of the Angel at Islington, when her poor husband fell in love with her.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE BOBBERY HUNT.

DURING breakfast the following morning, I asked Croker several times whom he meant by Purseram Bhow, the mysterious personage he had so frequently mentioned the day before; but he always evaded my question, saying, with a smile, that I would soon hear enough of Purseram Bhow, and of Hurry Punt too, but that he wouldn't spoil my pleasure by anticipation.

Croker, however, made up for his reserve on this point by his loquacity on everything connected with sporting, of which he was an enthusiast; and he gave me such descriptions of the delights of a jungle life, as made me curious, if not anxious, to participate in them. His bungalow, indeed, was little else than an arsenal of sylvan armoury; for the walls, if they could be so called, were everywhere hung with guns of all descriptions, powder-flasks, shot-belts, tiger and boar spears, pellet-bows, &c. &c.; the whole being intermingled with tiger and bear skins, elk and antelope horns, and one or two enormous skins of the boa-constrictor. These were all the spoils of his own hand in the jungles of Salsette and the neighbouring con-

tinent; to which he was frequently invited by some Mahratta chiefs, who had taken a great fancy to the Feringhee junglewalla.

Soon after breakfast, being informed that Major Snubley had returned from Elephanta, I got ready to report my arrival to the great man in person. Croker also dressed to accompany and introduce me; but, though the uniform did somewhat improve his outward man, he looked so tall, so gaunt, and so ungainly, that I could not forbear smiling as he strode along, flinging out his legs and arms like the sails of a lunatic windmill. He seemed, poor soul, to be sadly hampered by the coatee, sash, sword, belt, and "all the rest of the balderdash," as he expressed himself; but he took comfort from the reflection that the commandant having returned from his exploring trip to the cave temples, it would now be his turn to indulge in the more rational amusement of hog-hunting and tiger-shooting, to which he purposed introducing me without delay.

A walk of a few minutes brought us to the compound of Major Snubley; which, unlike Croker's wilderness, was walled in, and kept in the most rigid neatness and good order. The parterre, which abounded with flowers and shrubs, was intersected by trim gravel-walks, bordered by channels of chunam, for conveying water to every part of the grounds; while several pomegranate, custard-apple, and plantain-trees gratified at once the eye and the taste; and a deep well, with a palcotta, or balance-pole, for drawing the water, afforded an abundant supply for irrigation and the bath. The bungalow was also of more elaborate pretensions, being built of sun-dried bricks, plastered, ceiled, and covered with tiles—with a good verandah, and polished chunam pillars; while, at some paces' distance in front, was raised upon arches a sort of summer-house, built in a similar manner, and commanding a view of the barracks and adjacent territory.

We found the commandant in his hall, or central apartment, for the bungalow contained three rooms, seated at a large table covered with maps, and bundles of documents tied with red tape. He was a very solemn, dignified-looking person, and seemed, when we entered, to be absorbed in some very abstruse problem of civil or military statistics. With a well-affected start, as if suddenly roused from the deep profound of thought, he arose and gave me a most gracious reception, remarking, old-Indian like, the freshness of my European complexion, and observing, with a sigh, that his own was just like it in '92, when he made his first campaign at Seringapatam.

"That was a great affair, major," said Croker.

"We shall never see war on so grand a scale again, sir," responded the major. "It is not by such paltry expeditions as those to the Isle of France and Batavia that a man of talent and enterprise can hope to rise to the top of the tree. No, sir; it requires such an overwhelming armament as that of Lord Cornwallis—"

"But with all that," said Croker, "you were compelled to retreat on that occasion."

"True, sir," replied the major, "but only for want of provisions; but when we were joined by our valued friends and allies, Hurry Punt and Purseram Bhow—"

Here Croker's eye met mine, and he indulged in a little chuckle;

while I was taken so much by surprise, that it was with difficulty I could avoid laughing outright.

"Something seems to have tickled your fancy, gentlemen," said the major; "but, as I was saying, we were falling back on our resources, till one morning a cloud of cavalry appeared on our left flank, and supposing it was that miscreant Tippoo, we opened a dozen field-pieces upon them, when, lo and behold, it was our friend and ally Purseram Bhow—Hurry Punt on one flank, and Purseram Bhow on the other."

"A pize on that bitch, Juno!" exclaimed Croker, starting from his chair; "there she is tearing up all your bulbous roots," and out he ran, unable any longer to restrain his laughter.

"A singular young man, Mr. Blake," observed the major; "a very singular young man. The people here call him the Feringhee jungle-walla, or European wild man of the woods. We had one exactly like him at Seringapatam, in '92, and, strange to say, Purseram Bhow took a great fancy to him."

"Pray, sir," I asked, "who was Purseram Bhow?"

"He was the commander of the Mahratta contingent in the war of '92," replied the major, delighted at finding himself astride of his hobby; "and a very great man, sir, in his way, was Purseram Bhow. Hurry Punt was his second in command; but I always pinned my faith on the dictum of Purseram Bhow. The Punt was glorious in the onslaught, and the Bhow mighty in retreat."

Thus the worthy major went on during the whole interview, ringing the changes on the two Mahratta warriors, while he favoured me with an elaborate history of that doughty campaign. Whatever point of the narrative he started from, he was sure to wind it up with Hurry Punt or Purseram Bhow, or both. So mesmeric, indeed, was the effect this repetition had upon me, that I actually dozed with my eyes open, being utterly unconscious for the two mortal hours during which he kept me fascinated, as it were, of any other words than Hurry Punt and Purseram Bhow.

My docility, however, had this good effect, that the worthy major, finding me so patient a listener, invited me to share his bungalow, an offer which I gladly accepted; and some additional furniture being procured from Bombay, I was speedily installed in my new quarters, consisting of a comfortable bedroom and the aforesaid summer-house, which I made my study and sitting-room. Here I surrounded myself, as usual, when I had means and leisure, with books, drawings, and musical instruments, very much to the disgust of my new friend Croker, who had never read a book in his life, or played upon any instrument but the drum.

"Oh, by Jupiter!" he exclaimed, "you are enough to drive a fellow mad, with them books and picters, and all the rest of the balderdash. Who ever knew any good come of fluting and fiddling, and drawing riddle-merees, and breaking one's head about pothery, and all the rest of the balderdash? Take a gun in your fist, Percy Blake, and let us be off to the jungle, or I'll give you up for a milksop."

I pacified Croker with an assurance that I was ready to go whenever he chose, and he accordingly set about making preparations. In the mean time, he insisted on my joining a well-known sporting society,

whose title has long been a "household word" in the *res gestæ* of the East.

Sir Lionel, the distinguished son of the once celebrated Charlotte Smith, who was at that time lieutenant-colonel of the 65th regiment, was also president of the "Bobbery Hunt." Under his auspices I became a member of that famous sporting club, whose celebrity has long since spread from the eastern to the western hemisphere—though whether it still survives the chance and change of time I am unable to inform the curious reader.

At that period we had not subsidized the Mahrattas, nor sent the Peishwa to keep company with other ex-potentates at Benares, as Voltaire sent his dethroned kings to the carnival of Venice. Having, consequently, no territory on the continent, our hunting was entirely confined to the original donation which Charles II. made to the Company, having no use for it himself; or rather to that small portion of it called Colabah. This being a space of not more than five or six miles in circumference, it will be readily imagined that our sport was of a very limited character, especially as the whole of our hunting-ground was nearly covered with soldiers' barracks and officers' bungalows.

We made desperate attempts, however, to persuade ourselves that we were actually hunting; and great was our glorification when we had the good fortune to start a jackal for our English foxhounds. Then, indeed, the members turned out in full score, attired in the handsome uniform of the hunt; while crowds of the uninitiated followed in the rear, and every description of quadruped appeared upon the field, from the high-caste Arab down to the humble tattoo. Then, indeed, we made the welkin ring with our clamorous shouts; hunting the poor animal in and out of compounds and barrack-yards, taking flying leaps over guns and tumbrils, and scattering drill squads immersed in the mysteries of goose-step. Sometimes a portly Brahmin got enveloped in the mazes of the chase, and invoked the wrath of Mahadeo on our sacrilegious heads; sometimes a palanquin was upset, and its wealthy occupant scattered about on the dusty road, to the uproarious amusement of the mad hunters; sometimes a whole pack of pariah-dogs would fly before us, yelping, howling, snapping at, and biting bewildered foot-passengers in the madness of their fright; while fish-wives, pedlars, and other old women, would scatter their commodities to the winds, to avoid being trampled to death, as we swept along, like the wild huntsmen of German romance, over fence and furrow, through garden and flower-plot—riders tumbling in one direction, horses making summersaults in another—till, at last, weary and worn out, panting with heat and fatigue, we retired to the refreshing bath, to prepare for the enjoyment of the night. Then, after a late dinner, in our splendid club-room, when the social claret-jug circulated round the table, which was loaded with the riches of the eastern Pomona, and the sea-breeze, redolent of health, played refreshingly through open door and window, we recounted our individual exploits, and laughed at the mishaps of our neighbours; or else we "woke the night-owl with a catch that would draw three souls out of one weaver," cheerfully welcoming the small hours, and thus bringing to a happy close the labours of the day, and the glories of the Bobbery Hunt.

CHAPTER L.

A DAY IN THE JUNGLE.

HAVING furnished myself with a stout, active country horse, about fourteen hands high, and undergone a week's drilling with the boar-spear, under the tuition of Croker, during which we slaughtered sundry tame porkers that came in our way, without any remorse of conscience, we started about four o'clock one morning for Salsette, to have a day or two in the jungle. Our train consisted of our *ghorawallas* and grass-cutters for the use and behoof of the nags, our maty-boys for our own especial comfort, each with a brandy-bottle and a goglet of fresh water, three or four coolies with spears and rifles, some others with the dogs, and a couple of *bangy-wallas*, with basket-boxes, containing some creature comforts and changes of linen slung on bamboos across their shoulders: our respective dubashes had been sent on the evening before, to prepare breakfast for us.

As we rode across the Esplanade, the Parsees were already congregating to prostrate themselves on the first appearance of their god, as the glorious luminary rose above the horizon; but, though anxious to witness this novel and interesting sight, we were obliged to hurry on, for, as Croker remarked, we had eight or nine miles still to cover; and though the scent lies well before daylight, it evaporates very rapidly after sunrise.

We accordingly pushed on through Black Town, and past Byculla and Parel, the governor's residence, till in due time we arrived at the shallow strait that separates Bombay from Salsette, across which Governor Duncan had recently thrown a causeway; but, as we cantered our nags over his excellency's road, we little dreamt that some forty years later, even while I pen these lines, the same narrow opening would be spanned by a railway, and the crowning triumph of British science, capital, and skill exhibited for the first time to the wondering eyes of thousands upon thousands of our sable fellow-subjects.

But hark to cover! The sun is just tipping the lofty pinnacles of the Western Ghauts, whose magnificent range extends on our right beyond the Tannah river; while on our left are the rocky ridges of Salsette, crowned with hanging woods and matted jungle, interspersed with richly-cultivated fields, hamlets, and cottages; the road, as we proceed, becoming embowered under lofty trees, and discovering many a vista of some of the most magnificent scenery in the world.

We soon came to a small choultry in the wood, where we found a host of *peons*, *shikarees*,* and beaters, armed with *latties*, or long bamboos, rusty matchlocks, hunting-spears, and tulwars, under the command of the jemmadars of some neighbouring villages, who all salaamed profoundly to the great Croke Sahib, as they called him,

* Messengers and hunters.

by whose orders they were assembled. We also found our dubashes getting breakfast ready; and as this meal had to be despatched before we commenced business, we hurried them in their preparations.

While these were in progress, a horde of fifty or sixty wild-looking savages, all naked but the langooty, rushed down upon us from every opening in the jungle; and, drawing up in front of the choultry, saluted Croke Sahib as they would have done Nimrod, or Nadir Shah, or any other mighty hunter of biped or quadruped. These were charcoal-burners, fellows that dwell entirely in the woods, and hold no other communion with their civilized brethren of Bombay than by the silent interchange between their charcoal and such commodities as they may require from the market. On the present occasion, it seems, they volunteered their services, and those of twenty or thirty pariah dogs that accompanied them, to the great Croke Sahib; and the latter, having addressed a few sentences to them in their own dialect, which appeared to give general satisfaction, they all squatted down on the greensward, and awaited further orders with the most exemplary patience.

Croker now held a conference with the jemmadars and shikarees, and a plan of operations was laid down; in pursuance of which they, and the beaters and charcoal-burners, with all their pariah dogs, who, having excellent noses, are very useful on such occasions, set off to take up good positions for beating an extensive sugar-plantation, in which a sounder, or herd of hogs, had been marked down by the shikarees the evening before.

They were also attended by several horn-blowers and tomtom-beaters, it being necessary to muster on that side of the plantation as powerful a concert of diabolical sounds as possible, to interrupt the repose of our swinish enemies.

We then sat down to an excellent breakfast, at which, in addition to other good things, we were regaled with the bumbalo, a superior sort of sand-eel, served up with kedgerie, a dish consisting of boiled rice and split pease, enriched with butter, and coloured with turmeric. We had also the pomfret, a flat fish that abounds at Bombay, of so exquisite a flavour that a celebrated gourmand swore it was worth a voyage to India to enjoy it. In spite, however, of all these viands, we hurried over our morning meal; Croker from constitutional eagerness to be at the sport, and I from an ardent curiosity to witness, for the first time, this boasted Oriental pastime.

Our horses, having been well groomed and fed in the interim, were also eager for the field; and as I sprang on the back of mine, he bounded forward as if he actually shared in the excitement of the chase; while I firmly grasped my spear, a bamboo about nine feet long, with a glittering blade of eight inches, which Croker had sharpened on a hone for me, till its double edge was like that of a razor.

"Now rein in a little, Percy," said my friend, "and take my advice: fair and easy goes far, you know, and that shall be my motto; but you, I see, are full of tuzzy-muzzy, and all the rest of the balderdash."

"You wouldn't have me go to a hunt," I said, "as I would to a funeral."

"By no manner of means," replied Croker; "but you'll have occasion for all your horse's mettle when the boar is at speed."

"Speed!" I exclaimed; "ha, ha, ha! The speed of a pig! That's capital!"

"Laugh, and welcome," said Croker; "but take a fool's advice. Keep your horse well in hand, and look to your seat, which I see is that of a foxhunter; but you'll find the ground about here full of man-traps, and now and then a *bowlie*,* half full of water, that may bring you up in spite of the proverb."

"Ha, ha, ha! very good," I replied; "the morning air has sharpened your wit, Croker."

"Now then," he continued, "you and I will take our places on one side of the sugar-cane piece as silent as the grave, while the beaters make the devil's own row at the other. Then, when the hog bolts out, let us start fair for the first spear in him; keep you to his left side, and when you deliver your spear right behind the shoulder, file off to your left, to make way for the next comer."

I promised to observe all his directions, and we proceeded accordingly to take up our ground.

"But don't forget," said Croker, reining back, "that the boar's tusk is six inches clear of the jaw, and that if he gives you or your horse a rip, he will fit you for Padre Burrows's *godown*."†

"I'll keep a steady eye on the gentleman," I said.

"One word more," said Croker: "the boar always *rips*, and the sow always *bites*; so take care of your toes from the female salute."

We at length took up our respective positions, about one hundred yards apart, on one side of a fine sugar-cane plantation, surrounded by fields of wheat, barley, and other grain. On the opposite side of the plantation our beaters were ranged, about five or six feet distant from each other, waiting for the signal to begin. This being given by Croker, they advanced regularly, beating the canes with their *latties*, or long bamboos, shouting with all their might, sounding horns and beating tom-toms; which, added to the yelping and barking of two dozen dogs, made such an infernal din as might have scared all the boars in the jungle.

Meanwhile, we were as silent as the grave, eagerly expecting the outburst of the foe; while our horses, pricking their ears, and occasionally shuddering, seemed to anticipate the advent of some terrific monster. My own mind, I frankly confess, began to be somewhat disturbed at being so long kept on the rack of expectation; for, though a daring horseman after the hounds, and generally in at the death wherever I hunted,—in Ireland, in Leicestershire, and in the Peninsula,—yet the situation in which I now stood was so perfectly novel, and the nature of the game was so avowedly savage and ferocious, that I may well be excused for not feeling quite at home, any more than Peter the Great himself did, in this the first of my fields.

* A well.

† The churchyard, or "storehouse," of the Reverend Mr. Burrows, at that time garrison chaplain at Bombay.

My courage, however, had not time to ooze out at my fingers' ends, for the canes suddenly crashed, and were rent asunder within ten yards of where I stood ; then forth rushed, with a horrible grunt, a huge black monster, larger than the largest pig I had ever seen, with long tusks, bristles erect, and champing his foaming mouth, while his fiery eyes glared around with unmistakable fury.

My horse gave a sudden spring, then stood trembling, as if rooted to the spot, till Croker shouted "charge!" when, driving the spurs into his flanks, I dashed madly after the flying foe, followed by Croker, and all the dogs in full and glorious cry.

But if the size and ferocity of the monster had surprised me, I was perfectly astonished at his fleetness. It was somewhat early in the season ; and he had not been feeding long enough on the luxuriant crop of canes, which are so nutritive and fattening, to become indolent and fleshy ; he therefore sprang through the wheat with a rapidity which at one time actually distanced us all. We had to pass through some paddy-fields, however, which, being deep and muddy, apparently distressed him, and we evidently gained upon the chase ; till, at last, as we tore away over some broken ground, interspersed with rocks and low jungle, I came within a reasonable distance, and delivered my spear with all the force and velocity of which I was master. Unluckily, however, a large pariah-dog had at the moment seized the boar by the left ear, which, causing him to swerve a little to the right, my spear pinned the dog to the earth, and the liberated savage rushed on again with fresh rapidity.

"Way there!" shouted Croker, just at my horse's crupper ; and spurring out of his path, I turned off to seek another spear. With this I was soon furnished by my *ghorawalla*, a very active fellow, who had nearly kept up with us ; and, resuming the chase, I went full tilt after Croker.

Being a heavy rider, from his unwieldy stature, my friend lacked the speed with which I had opened the chase, but he made up for this by superior experience ; and, just as I was coming up with him, hand over hand, he darted his spear right through the body of the boar. Not being struck in a vital part, however, the monster still kept on his way towards a jungle copse that would have effectually screened him from our pursuit ; but, ere he had gained this friendly shelter, I plunged my spear into him just behind the left shoulder, and as it pierced his heart he instantly fell dead. I had thus the honour of killing the first game ; though Croker had the still greater glory of delivering the first spear, and drawing the first blood.

Several of our attendants now came up, and innumerable praises were showered upon us, while the panting dogs and horses rested after their severe and heavy run. We then wended our way back to the plantation, which some of our most experienced shikarees assured us still contained more of the sounder, or herd ; and having sent our beaters off to their former post, we took up our stations as before.

But this time we were left waiting a much longer period ; for the game kept so close, that it was not in the power of voice or tomtom to dislodge it from the dense and almost impervious cover. It was in vain that the beaters thrashed the canes unmercifully ; equally

vain were the wild sounds of collary horn, the barking of the dogs, and the frantic shouts of the peons, coolies, and charcoal-burners; not a stir was perceptible where the game was supposed to lie. At last the noise ceased altogether, and Croker, calling to one of the shikarees, asked him what was the matter.

"Master please, Croke Sahib," replied the shikaree, "coolie-logue plenty 'fraid; too much frightened come."

"That not proper business," said Croke Sahib. "What for I give cherry-merry?"

"No can help," replied the shikaree with a deprecating look. "Cooly poor man, Sahib; spose him bite leg, spose him rip belly, who can give rice to him piccaninny?"

As I could pretty well make out this Anglo-Indian dialogue, I asked Croker what the ordinary mode of proceeding was in such cases, which I supposed were not unfrequent in hog-hunting.

"It often happens," replied Croker, "that the beaters get terrified in this way; for a sow, if she has young ones, will frequently dash in amongst them, and bite them dreadfully, right and left. Our only resource, therefore, on such an occasion as the present, is to go boldly into the cane-piece, and call the sow to account with the grooved barrel."

"Then I claim the post of honour," I said. "You have had the first spear, let me have the first shot."

"By Jupiter, you shall then," said Croker; "but I'll be ready to back your tack, as we say at Skibbereen."

The beaters were accordingly ordered out of the plantation, that none of them might get hit in the *mêlée*; then, having ascertained, as nearly as possible, the direction in which the game was supposed to lie, we dismounted, and taking our rifles, prepared to enter the cane-piece. Croker followed me by convention at a distance of ten paces; and it was also settled that he was not, on any account, to take the first shot: these preliminaries being adjusted, we advanced towards the scene of action, our peons and ghorawallas calling out—

"Cobberdar, Blake Sahib! Plenty bad wild pig. Spose Croke Sahib go first, that proper business."

But I laughed at their warning; and, determined to see the adventure out, I stepped boldly into the cane-piece, my rifle at the present, and my finger on the trigger.

"These breeding sows," observed Croker, "for I suppose this is one, do more mischief to the canes than the boars themselves; for they not only devour them, but cut them up for litter, and to make little huts like, to cover them and their savage brood."

The canes were eight or ten feet high, waving to and fro over our heads, as the light breeze played among their silky tops; but the stems were so close together, as to render our progress slow and difficult. We could see, however, pretty well some distance before us; and with our rifles cocked and protruded in advance, we were tolerably well prepared for anything that might happen. But it was, I admit now, in my old age, a foolhardy enterprise; to beard, even in her very den, amidst the close and almost impervious jungle of

sugar-cane, the grisly monster whose mate had so lately startled and astonished me even in the open field. Youth, however, and animal spirits stifled the voice of prudence in our breasts; and on we went, wantonly tempting, as it were, the utmost malice of fate.

We had proceeded in this manner for some time through the wilderness of canes; our eyes, our ears on the alert, our expectation on the rack, and the profound silence that prevailed adding intensely to the excitement of the scene. At length we approached a spot that was partially cleared of the canes, which had been eaten away by the voracious animals; a great portion of half-consumed fragments being heaped up in a sort of mound in the centre. I was making my way to this spot, the canes crashing at every step I took, when the mound of rubbish, as I took it to be, suddenly burst open, and, with a fearful grunt, out sprang an immense sow, followed by a dozen young hogs, her hopeful progeny, squeaking and tumbling higgledy-piggledy over each other.

With a deadly spring, the monster made at me; but, though the surprise was perfect, I had presence of mind enough to receive her with the muzzle of my rifle, which fortunately entered her open mouth, as I pulled the trigger, and the balls from both barrels went crashing down her gullet, putting a speedy period to her marauding existence. The impetus of the bound, however, bore me to the earth; and there I lay under the dead body of the enemy, till Croker came up, and with some difficulty relieved me from the burden. The peons and coolies were now summoned to our aid, and speedily carried forth the grisly prey from the cane-piece; singing *Io* pæans to the praise and glory of Percy Blake Sahib, Gureeb purwaun and Bahauder Jung.*

Meanwhile, the young grunters, whose nest I had so effectually broken up, having rushed in their terror out of the plantation, were speedily set upon by all the dogs of high and low degree; poligar and pariah, greyhound and bulldog, and despatched with multitudinous wounds; the spoil of our morning's sport thus embracing every individual of the whole family, whose depredations had long been a source of annoyance to the neighbouring villages. Their head men accordingly came and thanked us; and hoped that Croke Sahib and Percy Blake Sahib would often visit their neighbourhood, and relieve them from more of the savage monsters with which their jungles abounded.

CHAPTER LI.

INTERVIEW WITH A BOA-CONSTRUCTOR.

TIFFIN being now announced as ready, we repaired to our choultry, where, after a shower-bath in the ordinary manner from a chatty, and a change of linen, we sat down, comparatively cool and refreshed, in our sylvan shade, though the thermometer ranged at 120°

* Protector of the poor, and valiant lord.

in the sun. It is needless to trouble my reader with our bill of fare ; on such occasions as the present, if our *cuisine* is not the best in the world, it is at least the most *appétissante*, when youth and exercise impart a healthy tone to the stomach, and the gastric juices are not impeded in the due performance of their functions. A satisfactory portion of the solids having been disposed of, we cocked our legs up on the table, as we smoked our cheroots ; and brandy paunee being the order of the day, we drank, and laughed, and chatted over the morning's incidents.

Somehow or other, it occurred to me that Croker was unreasonably jealous of this last exploit of mine ; for he harped more than he ought to have done on my first misadventure in spearing the pariah dog instead of the boar, which he said would make a capital story at the next meet of the Bobbery Hunt. He was evidently piqued, I thought, that he had not killed the sow himself ; and I accused him mentally of selfish ambition in wishing to monopolize all the honours of the day. He was, however, a very good fellow, with whom I did not wish to quarrel ; and lest some unlucky or unguarded word might disturb our harmony, I threw my rifle over my arm, and sauntered into the jungle.

Here nature had strewn her riches, and squandered her beauties with a lavish hand : the towering teak and blackwood intermingled their leafy branches, to guard the greensward from the parching splendours of the sun, whose beams, occasionally breaking through the dense mass of foliage, scattered long patches of brilliant verdure across the deep, cool shade. The tufty mango grew side by side with the spreading tamarind ; and the tall slender columns of the bamboo shot upwards, in diverging rays from one common centre ; their united stems forming a bulwark impenetrable to all but the insidious snake, whose yellow and greenish coils are not unfrequently taken for the vegetable itself. The rocky heights that sprang up amidst this glorious woodland were crowned with whole forests of wild palmyra-trees ; while occasional patches of cultivation displayed the lilac nym, the jack, the guava, the plantain, and various other fruit-trees, whose forms and produce are equally pleasing, wholesome, and nutritious.

Absorbed in admiration and delight, I wandered on through this ever-varying wilderness, sheltered from the sun by the vast vegetable umbrella that spread above, swarming with myriads of birds, monkeys, and squirrels ; while below, a distant antelope would sometimes cross my path, or a startled hare spring from its form, or a peacock or jungle-fowl rush on whirring wing from one covert to another, to avoid the unwonted stranger.

In the midst of so many objects of natural beauty and interest, some of an artificial character would frequently intervene ; such as an ancient tank, whose finely-chiselled steps and sculptured ornaments spoke of past glories, and whose green, stagnant water was overgrown with the broad leaves of the lotus. Or a mouldering terrace, or mythological antiquity ; a bull, or a lingam, indicating the site as one where the worship of Mahadeo had prevailed in all its sanguinary splendour, long ere the image-making and idol-breaking

Christian had discovered and desecrated the recluse and hallowed precinct.

One of these venerable remains of bygone superstition was an immense artificial cavern, hollowed out by human labour and ingenuity from the bowels of a granite mountain, whose solid material was sculptured into a variety of pillars, altars, and rude images of the deity—in his triple attributes of creator, preserver, and destroyer, personified under the forms of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. Two of these figures of colossal magnitude, each at least twenty feet high, which stood at the entrance, still bore the coating of red paint with which they had been daubed by the Portuguese, who had turned this pagan temple into a Christian church, with the view, probably, of winning over to the new faith some proselytes from the creed of ancient days and long-cherished associations.

Having gratified my curiosity, in spite of the nauseous and suffocating air of this cavern, which was now only frequented by bats, jackals, and other birds and beasts of filthy habits, I gladly inhaled once more the pure air of the jungle, and wandered onwards, ruminating on the mysteries of faith and diversity of creeds that have puzzled and perplexed the human brain, setting man against his brother man, with the ferocity of the tiger, and in the name of a God of love and mercy, through every age and clime of this wondrous world. In short, I became so involved in my own speculations, that I lost my way; and the more I endeavoured to retrace it, in a wilderness where every object was multiplied a hundred-fold, with the most perplexing similarity, the more effectually I became puzzled in the labyrinth.

The sun was now declining towards the horizon, and the shadows every moment became broader and deeper. Apprehensive that I might be overtaken by the night in a place that was neither safe nor agreeable, I fired off both my barrels several times, in the hope of attracting the notice of some of my party. This at last had the desired effect; for I first heard a distant and faint halloo, and this was succeeded by several others around me, which all seemed to be converging towards the spot where I stood. Many of these sounds were doubtless nothing more than echoes; but it was evident that my companions were on the search for me; and, at length, to my great relief, I could distinguish the voice of Rungapa, as he shouted out,—

“Cobbeedaur, Percy Blake Sahib! Plenty baugh hi!”

It was, to be sure, very encouraging to learn that there were plenty of tigers in the jungle; and I looked around me suspiciously into every brake and thicket which might serve as cover to the feline monsters. At length, nearly exhausted by fatigue and anxiety, I sat down on the long round stem of a palmyra-tree, which lay stretched across my path, half buried in rank weeds and jungle-grass, determined to wait there till some one should come to my assistance.

They approached at length on every side, and the first that appeared was Croker himself, who gave a view halloo the moment he perceived me. He was coming down a gentle slope, laughing and

singing in his usual unsophisticated manner, till he got within thirty yards of where I sat, fairly fagged with the exertions of the day. Then suddenly stopping, and looking, as I thought, particularly wicked, he brought his rifle to the present, and fired off both barrels directly at me; so effectually, indeed, that I tumbled backwards, from the object on which I was seated, mortally wounded, as I naturally concluded.

I jumped up, however; and though I looked upon myself as a dead man, the most savage revenge inspired my breast, for it struck me that Croker had been either seized with sudden frenzy, or, in a paroxysm of jealous spite, had taken advantage of this secluded spot to murder one whose morning exploit had cast his own into the shade. I therefore sprang at him, determined to avail myself of the few remaining moments of existence to punish his treachery. I seized him by the collar, and shook him, tall and towering as he was; but to my utter amazement he was choking with laughter.

"By Jupiter!" at last he exclaimed, "you are mad, Blake. Just look at what you were sitting on."

I looked, and beheld to my horror and astonishment, that the palmyra stem on which I had been sitting was in motion; writhing in frightful convulsions, lashing the rocks, trees, and brambles with the most intense and destructive fury.

"Stand clear of him!" shouted Croker, dragging me away from the spot; "if he gives you a whisk of his tail, you're done for."

Bewildered and stupified, I gazed on the phenomenon till the supernatural convulsions gradually subsided, and the object, whatever it was, animal or vegetable, lay gasping, fluttering, and finally motionless and deprived of existence. I felt as if in the paroxysm of a terrible dream, ready to yield up the ghost to a frightful nightmare; and I stupidly gazed on Croker, as he joyfully cried out,—

"Oh Jupiter! what a beautiful boa!"

"A boa!" I repeated, forgetting at the moment that there was anything else in existence under that title but the once fashionable appendage to a lady's dress.

Croker drew me cautiously towards the spot; and then, for the first time, I comprehended that the supposed palmyra-tee on which I had been sitting, was actually a monstrous boa-constrictor, which, having gorged an immense prey, was lying half-concealed amidst the long grass, in that state of torpid indulgence peculiar to the gigantic reptile; otherwise, I must have paid with my life for the liberty I took in making a camp-stool of him. He was now perfectly dead, having received both balls in his head; which, to Croker's great mortification, was dreadfully shattered.

"By Jupiter!" said Croker, "I'll engage that fellow swallowed a young jackass this morning; and if I hadn't killed him——"

"He'd have swallowed an old one this evening," I added, finishing the sentence for him. "Too true, my excellent friend," I continued, "a donkey, indeed, I must have been to suppose you were murdering me at the very moment you so admirably saved my life."

"Oh, that's all balderdash," replied Croker, with his usual *insouciance*, "you'll do as much for me another time, Blake. I wouldn't

have tried it, though," he continued, "if I didn't know you could stand fire."

Peons, coolies, and charcoal-burners were now summoned to the spot, to bear off the glorious spoil; and as they bent under the enormous load, which they carried on bamboos, Croker exclaimed in high glee,—

"Twenty-six feet long, and four feet in girth. By Jupiter! 'tis a beautiful boa!"

That night, after a plentiful supper, and *quant. suf.* of brandy paunee, we spread our mats on the chunam floor of the choultry, and slept the sleep of hunters. The following day was devoted to skinning and salting the skin of the "beautiful boa;" an operation too disgusting for me even to look upon, but which afforded as much delight to Croker as the one in which I first beheld him engaged, the morning I landed.

On the third day, having first satisfied our sylvan followers to their hearts' content, we returned to Colabah, with such trophies as attracted all the world to Croker's bungalow. This snake was christened by universal consent "Paddy Blake's boa;" a name still current amongst the Hamadryads of Dungaree, and the young carpenters of Mazagong: and it is but little to say that so great a monster was never seen before or since in Old Woman's Island.

CHAPTER LII.

THE MASSOOLAH BOAT.

THE nine days' wonder occasioned by this singular and amusing transaction had scarcely subsided, and I was actually making preparations to follow my dear Julia to Goa, whither she had been sent to avoid me, and snatch the golden fruit from its guardian dragon, when we received orders to proceed instantan to Madras; to which presidency my regiment had returned from Batavia.

Here was an interruption to my promised joys; for I had actually engaged a passage in a patamar to Goa, and Croker had exacted a promise from his friend, the garrison chaplain, that he would tie the irrevocable knot for us on our return to Bombay. But this cursed route baffled my hopes, for I was refused leave of absence point blank, the *Indiaman* being ready at her moorings to take us on board; and I was thus compelled, for the present, to curb my impatience for the bonds of matrimony.

I shall never forget the scene of our embarkation: one hundred and fifty recruits, and two hundred women and children, black, white, brown, and whitey-brown, every cast of feature, every shade of colour, European, Eurasian, and native Hindoo! The row was stupendous; the confusion of tongues surpassed that of Babel: the squabbles of the soldiers with the lascars, the outcries of the women, the streams of the children, and the barking of Croker's two dozen dogs, produced altogether an uproar on the pier-head, in the boats, and on

board the *Indiaman*, such as had never been witnessed before, even in that noisy locality. For the settlement of the thousand and one disputes that arose from such prolific sources, every one came to me; Croker having gone off to the brigade major of king's troops to get an order for the embarkation of his dogs and the skin of his boa-constrictor, the latter having been refused admittance, on the plea that, being badly cured, it was disgusting and infectious in smell and appearance. Major Snubley, in despair of being able to effect anything like peace, also took himself off, remarking to me as he went over the ship's side,—

“Purseram Bhow would never tolerate such a scene as this, sir; he would either blow up the ship, or bowstring the women and children, as the shortest solution of the difficulty. He was a great man, sir, in his way, was Purseram Bhow.”

At last all got on board; but here a new difficulty presented itself, for the orlop-deck, which is always appropriated to troops, was chock full of cotton and opium for China; and so was a great portion of the main-deck, the guns even being stowed away in the hold, to make room for those precious commodities. It was in vain that I shouted for the captain: he was not to be found; and the first mate was a crabbed sort of cross between a bulldog and terrier, that neither would nor could do anything in the matter. He said it was all the fault of the governor in council, who knew the crowded state in which the ship was, and should not have sent so many troops on board. The weather was fine, he added, and the men and women might stow themselves away on the forecastle, and the booms and boats amidships; all that his crew wanted being room to work the ship.

Fortunately we had delightful weather, and a favourable passage. In a week we rounded Ceylon, having a splendid view of Adam's Peak and its subordinate mountains; and, in another, the long low coast of Coromandel hove in sight, sprinkled with cocoanut-tops, with here and there the lofty tower of a pagoda rising above the flat, monotonous horizon. Great, indeed, was our jubilation when we came to anchor in the roadstead of Madras, and beheld the marble-like aspect of the lines of palaces, as they seemed to be, that stretched along the beach to the northward of Fort St. George, whose battlements, bristling with cannon, were washed by the spray of the well-known surf, as it broke in thunder on the sandy shore.

Towards evening we were amused with the approach of a catamaran; this was nothing but two logs of cocoanut-tree lashed together, on which the boatman, if I may so call him, sat squat on his hams, with a paddle in his hands, that he used alternately, right and left. As he came alongside, bobbing up and down, like a piece of cork, with the motion of the waves, he took a chit, or note, from his langooty, or waistcloth, and handed it to a seaman at a lower deck port, for the *burra sahib*. This was an order to get the troops in readiness to land forthwith; and soon after, we were surrounded by ten or twelve Massoolah boats to take us to shore.

It was not, however, without misgiving that we intrusted our bodies to the safeguard of these singular specimens of naval architecture. Let the reader imagine a huge, shapeless, hollow shell,—

without deck, masts, sails, or rigging,—formed of rough planks of the cocoanut-tree, actually stitched together (there not being a single nail in the whole structure) with a sort of twine, made from the fibrous coating of the cocoanut, and he will readily understand the diffidence with which we stepped on board such a shaking, bending, pliable fabric, which might, for aught we knew, collapse with our weight, and carry us all to the bottom. The Massoolah boat is, however, the only description of vessel that can live in this tremendous surf, which would dash the most substantial vessel that ever was built in England to atoms in a few moments.

Our crew consisted of eight or ten wild-looking fellows, naked all but the langooty, who, with long uncouth oars, impelled us gently forward, until we approached the outer wave of the surf; while our elastic boat, yielding to every pressure, seemed ready, as we thought, to burst asunder at the first shock, and plunge us into the deep. Suddenly the boatmen set up a wild, vociferous chorus of "Ulla! ulla! ulla!" which increased to an extraordinary rapidity of enunciation as we rose to the summit of a watery mountain; for we were now within the influence of the surf.

Scarcely had we crested this enormous wave, which was at least twenty feet high, when we were plunged into a deep and foaming abyss; the song of the boatmen now sounding in our ears like the yells of so many fiends, rejoiced at having entrapped their prey. The land had totally disappeared from our eyes, and nothing was visible but two huge walls of water, supporting, as it were, the canopy of heaven. We had barely time to wonder at this strange position, when, with a fearful hoist, we found ourselves elevated to the summit of another mountain wave; plunged again into a foaming abyss; lifted for the third time to another watery pinnacle; and then, with a long impetuous sweep, cast high and dry upon the beach.

By the time we had collected our scattered senses, we found ourselves safe from the thundering surge, and surrounded by a host of smiling and obsequious dubashes, maty-boys, coolies, humauls, ghoracurras, &c. &c., who offered us every possible comfort, accommodation, and luxury, as if they were the ready agents of some beneficent genius who presided over this enchanted land.

We had no time, however, to avail ourselves of their tempting offers, for we were marched off immediately for Poonamalee, an extensive dépôt some fifteen miles distant. But, as we jogged along on the beautiful Mount-road, smooth and level as a bowling-green, and lined on each side with splendid palaces, luxuriant gardens, and park-like pleasure-grounds, I felt inclined to repeat the well-known Persian couplet—

Oh! if there be an Elysium on earth,
It is this! It is this!

Sol, in Homeric phrase, had now sunk into the arms of expecting Thetis, but the atmosphere was excessively hot and sultry. Major Snubley had accommodated himself with a palanquin for the march; Croker had hired a tattoo, which, when he mounted, his long legs swept the ground; but I withstood all temptations of a similar nature, being determined on all occasions to walk with the men—a

species of magnanimity which greatly excited the wonder and contempt of the natives. A number of hackeries, doolies, and other conveyances having been hired for the women and children, brought up the rear, with a long line of bullocks laden with our baggage; and thus we proceeded on our route, to the great admiration of the mulls, as the Madras people are called, from their fondness of mullikatauny.

But night had now come down; and though a splendid moon had risen, we had scarcely got half way upon our journey when two or three of the men began to complain that they couldn't see.

"Hollo! hollo!" cried one, "I'm blind!"

"By jingo, I'm stone blind!" cried another, as they both began to stagger about till they fell down by the road-side, where they were soon joined by several others in the same predicament.

"What's this? What's this?" exclaimed Major Snubley, as his humauls now came grunting along. "Is it a mutiny? Purseram Bhow would blow these fellows away from the mouth of a 24-pounder."

"Fiddlestick, mutiny!" responded Croker. "It's no mutiny, but blindness; the men are all getting blind in front."

"Oh, if that be all," said the major, "you have only to push on, Croker, with those that can see; those that cannot must stay where they are, with a few men to look after them, till the sun rises, when they will be sure to recover their sight. I know this night-blindness perfectly well; the first time I ever observed it, Mr. Blake, was one evening when I commanded a guard of honour over Purseram Bhow, in the jungle that surrounds Savindroog—"

Here, luckily for me, the major's humauls suddenly whipped up the palanquin, and bore him off, in the midst of his story, the last of which I heard was a murmuring repetition of Purseram Bhow—ow—ow, which chimed in passably well with the ordinary chorus of the palanquin boys.

"Fall in, men!" shouted Croker. "By Jupiter! this is more of the balderdash. Keep your sections now, bad seran to you, for an awkward squad as ye are. Slope arms! quick march!" and on we went again; blind men falling out occasionally, and lying down patiently by the road-side till the sun got up.

At length, about 12 o'clock, we arrived at Poonamalee, with about half our men, and no women, the latter having stopped to comfort the sick.

It was a beautiful moonlight night; and the broad, level esplanade upon which the barracks and officers' quarters are built, in long, low lines of masonry, had a peculiar air of neatness and cleanliness. The men were dismissed to their barrack-rooms, where refreshment was supplied to them from the canteen, and we proceeded to the mess-room.

This occupied the centre of a fine esplanade; its numerous doors all open to the greensward, giving ready ingress to a well-furnished supper-table, brilliantly lighted, which awaited our presence; and there we brought the labours of the day to a cheerful close, in spite of Major Snubley's old stories about Hurry Punt and Purseram Bhow.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE SACRILEGE.

WE remained at Poonamalee only long enough to be furnished with tents and other camp-equipage; and then got orders to march to Bangalore, about 200 miles distant, where the regiment lay. Our mess was increased by Dr. Scott, the assistant-surgeon of the 3rd native cavalry, a shrewd fellow and a jolly companion, who was ordered to take us in medical charge: our commissariat and transport department being also duly attended to, and hackeries provided for the women and children, we commenced our march.

I have, on a former occasion, spoken in praise of a march in England, as a delightful party of pleasure, but I doubt if it be not greatly surpassed by one in India. The day's journey, for instance, rarely exceeds ten or twelve miles; and this may be performed on horseback, or in a palanquin, according to the state of the exchequer. When we come to our ground, having sent our servants in advance, we find an excellent breakfast laid out, as if by enchantment, in some shady tope or comfortable choultry by the side of a tank. By the time this has been disposed of, the tents have come up and are pitched: then the careworn subaltern may lie down upon his comfortable couch, to repose after his morning's fatigue. Or, if so disposed, he may throw his gun over his arm, and shoot paddy-birds or florikens; or, if the country be jungly, he may bag a peacock, an antelope, or a wild boar, making up his mind to the possibility of falling in with an elk or a tiger, in which case his maty-boy and other attendants will leave him to shift for himself. After this sylvan exercise he returns to his tent, throws off his clothes, has half a dozen chatties of water poured over him, sits down and dresses leisurely, saunters to the mess-tent, where an excellent dinner awaits him, indulges in its varied enjoyments till the drowsy god asserts his reign, and enables him, by sound repose, undisturbed by guard or outlying picket, to meet the vicissitudes of the morrow. How often have I compared this playing at soldiers with our long, fatiguing marches in the Peninsula, our sleepless nights in the trenches, our sudden retreats without tents, canteens, or camp-equipage, our lost dinners, and our empty stomachs! And every time I did so my conscience seemed to reproach me with the enjoyment of my present luxury.

In this manner we journeyed on for several days without meeting with any incident worth recording. Croker and I supplied the mess plentifully with all sorts of game, in pursuit of which we wandered over hill and dale, sometimes floundering in paddy-fields, sometimes losing ourselves in the intricacies of the jungle; rarely, however, did it happen that our attendants were not heavily laden with the spoils of the chase, which we freely shared amongst the feminine portion of our nomadic community.

One unlucky day, as Croker called it, for he was insensibly imbibing the superstitions of the people with whom he mingled so familiarly, we had met with little or nothing; and were returning moody and disappointed to camp, with a paddy-bird and a few red-legged partridge only. Our road lay through a Brahmin village, completely embowered amidst the numerous stems and wide-spreading branches of a magnificent banyan-tree. The air of neatness, cleanliness, and calm religious repose that breathed around, affected me in an uncommon degree; and I asked myself why should not happiness be found in such a secluded spot, as well as in all the turmoil and troublesome pursuits of the great world.

There was scarcely a human being to be seen; now and then, perhaps, a graceful female, with majestic step, coming from the bowlie, or village well, with her brazen lota, filled with the sacred fluid, steadily balanced upon her well-formed head. Or else, a venerable sage, reclining in the shade, with a book, composed of strips of the talipot leaf, in his hand, closely written with the stylus; haply containing an episode of the Ramayuna, or that portion of sacred history which represents Krishna as opening his divine mouth and showing therein, to his astonished nurse, the universe and all its wondrous glories.

But, few and far between as were the human beings below, the umbrageous foliage above was rife with myriads of its customary denizens. Blue pigeons, in thousands, flew amidst or floated round the wondrous mass of leaves in eddying circles; while the lazy flying-foxes hung in hundreds by the tips of their bat-like wings from the branches in the dark recesses of the tree; and several distinct races and generations of monkeys played, frisked, and chattered amongst the pillared windings of this gigantic monarch of the vegetable kingdom.

The gambols and antics of these singular animals at first amused me, as I sauntered on before Croker, who was collecting his dogs, and chastising the wild and refractory. As the monkeys scampered away from the Feringhee, I laughed heartily at seeing them tumble over each other; and they returned my laughter with such incessant chattering and singular gesticulations, so germane, as it were, to the actual posture of affairs, that I could not help thinking there was some rational foundation for the Monboddo system after all.

They evidently looked upon me as an intruder on their consecrated ground—an invader of their vested rights; and their indignation was fully evinced, not only in their gestures, but their actions; for they grinned, gnashed their teeth, and pelted me with leaves, branches, and pebbles. There was one old fellow, with a white top-knot, that seemed more virulent in his hostility than all the rest of the gang; his gestures were contemptuous and threatening in the extreme; and the paroxysms of his impotent rage, though they amused me at first, became troublesome in the end; for he followed me from branch to branch, venting his malice in a thousand little ways; till, at last, when he stood at a considerable distance, on one of the top-most branches, I levelled my rifle at his top-knot, and sent a bullet through his head.

Scarcely had he fallen to the earth, when out from cabins, huts,

and jungle recesses rushed a multitude of men, women, and children; shouting, yelling, screaming, wringing their hands, tearing their hair, and exhibiting the most unequivocal signs of mingled grief and horror; while thousands upon thousands of blue pigeons, frightened by the report, fluttered about in all directions, and the flying-foxes flitted silently backwards and forwards, like the ghost of deceased Brahmins at the day of doom.

"Oh, by Jupiter! you have done it now, in earnest, Blake," exclaimed Croker, running up at the disturbance; "we shall have to fight our way back to camp, my boy."

This, indeed, seemed very evident; for an immense crowd of people,—Heaven knows where they all sprang from in a moment,—were closing around us fast, with threatening cries and gestures, eager, apparently, to tear us to pieces. We presented our rifles, and kept them at bay for a while, till one fellow, bolder than the rest, seized mine by the barrel, and endeavoured to wrest it from me. I shook him off in an instant, and gave him a gentle punch with the butt-end, in the stomach; when, to my horror and amazement, he fell dead, stone dead, apparently, on the ground.

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Croker, "you have now killed a man and a monkey, and we shall have a coroner's inquest, and all the rest of the balderdash."

The sudden death of this fellow multiplied the disturbance tenfold, of course; but it also relieved us from our tormentors, for they all gathered round the fallen wretch, bewailing his untimely fate, and appealing to Heaven for vengeance on his murderer. We now got back as fast as we could to the camp, very much agitated, of course, at the dreadful accident, and having no one to consult with as to the consequences; for Major Snubley was enjoying his siesta, and Dr. Scott had ridden off to look at a distant pagoda.

It wasn't long, as we anticipated, ere we beheld an innumerable host of mourners coming in melancholy procession from the Brahmin village towards the camp; one party bearing the dead body of the man on a bamboo frame; and another, the dead body of the monkey; equally, if not more so, the object of general sympathy and sorrow. They drew up on an open space, in front of the head-quarter tent, and, depositing the two corpses on the ground, they set up such a *phililoo* as awoke the major in a terrible fright, and attracted every soul in camp to the spot, soldiers, women, children, horse-keepers, grass-cutters, &c. &c.

This appeared to be very consoling to the friends of the deceased; for they set up another tremendous howl, which brought the major out of his tent in a hurry, rubbing his eyes, and exclaiming,—

"Good gracious! what is the matter? Never have I heard such a disturbance since the battle of Seringapatam, when Purseram Bhow cut up the camp-followers of Tippoo."

Fifty voices, at least, responded to the major's question; each, doubtless, with a different version of the affair. But, as he could make neither head nor tail of the matter, he appealed to his dubash, who, being himself a Brahmin, gave him a most awful statement of the case.

"Good gracious, Mr. Blake!" said the major, pale and trembling, "you have committed murder and sacrilege. If this had happened, sir, in the camp of Purseram Bhow—"

"It's no such thing," said Croker, stoutly interrupting the major; "that dubash of yours has been telling you a pack of lies, as I'll prove to his face." Here he stated the whole affair in Hindostanee, in which, and some of the country dialects, he had great fluency; appealing to the crowd, as he went on, for the truth of his assertions.

"But, sir," said the major, "I must believe the evidence of my own eyes; there lies the dead monkey."

"Well," responded Croker, "'tis only a monkey after all, and make the most of it; my friend is willing to pay a handsome fine for shooting him."

"But he has committed a sacrilege, sir," cried the major; "that monkey, perhaps, contained the transmigrated soul of the god Hanoomaun."

"That's all balderdash," returned Croker.

"Sir," said the major, "I look upon the Hindoo system of mythology as the most ancient and mysterious doctrine in the universe; comprising as it does the metempsychosis, or trans——"

"Oh, Jupiter!" said Croker, "you're always looking into the dictionary for big words to bother us."

"And sure I am," continued the major, "that Purseram Bhow, in all his glory, wouldn't dare commit such an act as this."

"That may be," said Croker; "but he was only a black rascal after all."

"Then you are of opinion," said the major, "that white people are at liberty to shoot men and monkeys whenever they please?"

"I am of opinion," said Croker, "that this black rascal deserved his death, for he first seized upon Blake's gun; and, after all, the punch he got of the butt-end wouldn't kill a mosquito."

Here the multitude raised another dismal howl; after which, the principal Brahmin declared his intention of sitting *dhurna* on the major, until he got satisfaction for the murder and sacrilege committed that day in his village.

Accordingly, at a sign from this very astute personage, the multitude squatted themselves down before the door of the major's tent; and the chief Brahmin, drawing a dagger, declared his resolution to stab himself if the major ventured to step beyond this sacred cordon.

"Good gracious, Mr. Blake!" said the poor major; "you see what a predicament you have brought me into! But perhaps I should explain to you the meaning of this awful ceremony——"

"It's all balderdash," interrupted Croker.

"'Tis no such thing, sir," replied the major; "but a very sacred and mysterious rite, by which an injured person seeks to obtain justice; for which purpose he places himself at the door of the person from whom he seeks redress—mine, for instance—and threatens to poison or stab himself, if that person issue from that doorway till he is satisfied."

"Then cut a hole in the kanauts," said Croker; "and go out by that."

"Even that is provided against," said the major; "for, as you see, the Brahmin's attendants have drawn a cordon round the whole tent, and I must either starve here, or cause the death of the venerable priest, by violating the sanctity of his *dhurna*."

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Croker, "such flummery as that won't do for an English stomach."

"'Tis not flummery, sir," retorted the major; "for I recollect when Hurry Punt, who was himself a high-caste Brahmin—I must explain to you, Mr. Blake, that Punt is an abbreviation of Pundit; a doctor, or, I should rather say, *doctissimus*, most learned in the law——"

Here Dr. Scott galloped into the camp from his excursion, and hastened to the spot, very much astonished at the state of affairs.

"As for you, Mr. Blake," continued the major, "it will be my painful duty to send you back to Madras, under arrest, to take your trial for this murder."

"Murder!" exclaimed Dr. Scott. "Who has he murdered?"

I told the doctor, with whom I was an especial favourite, how the whole affair had arisen.

"But are you sure the man is dead?" demanded the doctor. "Let me feel his pulse."

"No, no, no!" shouted the multitude, crowding around the dead body; "the murdered man is a Brahmin, and the doctor is a Pariah. Impossible for a Pariah to touch a Brahmin."

The doctor smiled significantly; and, addressing the people in their own dialect, asked if they would like to see the murdered man restored to life.

"Certainly," they replied, "if such a thing were possible."

"Then," said the doctor, "I undertake to work this miracle for you. You all know what wonders an English doctor can perform."

"Yes, yes, yes, we standy," every one exclaimed. "Feringhee doctor like one god."

"But you musn't dare to touch the body," said the chief Brahmin.

"Certainly not," replied the doctor.

"Neither with hand, knife, stick, or lancet," continued the Brahmin.

"Very well," said the doctor. "I agree to all your terms; I'll merely stand by his side during the magical operation."

There was a good deal of whispering, and anxious deliberation amongst the crowd, while the doctor went into his tent for a moment; and on his return, the principals among them stood closely on the watch, to prevent him from touching the body. We drew nigh also, eager to witness a result in which we were so deeply interested; the soldiers, women, and children crowded after us, and all hung forward in breathless suspense to witness the stupendous miracle of raising the dead.

The murdered man was lying on his back upon the ground, perfectly naked, all but his cummerband and turban. His body was motionless and already stiff; there was no breathing, no apparent pulsation, nothing whatever to indicate that the soul had not taken its flight from the senseless mass of clay that lay before us; and yet there

was a look of confidence about the doctor that I could not at all account for.

The latter now took his station by the side of the dead body; and, standing upright, gazed around with a glance full of mystic meaning. He then drew from his pocket a small phosphorus bottle, at that time a recent invention, with a match, and a stick of sealing-wax. Waving these *instrumenta magica* backwards and forwards, he elevated his voice, and chaunted forth, in a solemn and sonorous tone, the national anthem of "God save the King!"

At the end of this stanza, which produced an evident effect on the nerves of the multitude, the doctor plunged the match into the phosphorous bottle; and, applying it to the sealing-wax, three burning drops fell in rapid succession on the naked stomach of the defunct.

Up sprang the wretch, with a yell that would have frightened a whole prairie of wild bulls; and off he ran, shouting "Murder! murder! Apa Samce! Apa Samee!" in a voice of intense agony.

Off set Croker, also, with his dog-whip; and laying it into the fugitive with right good will, as he roared and ran, he gave the impostor a memento of British vengeance both before and behind. Dhurna was broke up with astonishing celerity; and the innocent Brahmins and Brahminees scuttled off, being pelted with stones out of the camp, by the women and children; while Major Snubley declared that he had never witnessed such a piece of deception since the wonderful days of Purseram Bhow.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE PETTICOAT MUTINY.

FOR some days after this startling event, we bowled along over the level and uninteresting plains of the Carnatic, without the occurrence of any incident worth mentioning. In this period, we passed Arcot, then a cavalry station, and once celebrated for the glorious defence of an old rickety fort by Clive; who, with twoor three hundred sepoys, kept ten thousand of Chunda Sahib's troops at bay for sixty days, and finally beat them off, at a critical moment for the glory and stability of the British empire in India. We also passed by Velore, a fortress rendered famous by an equally gallant exploit of one of our modern heroes, Gillespie; whose lamentable fall, when leading a desperate assault on Kalunga, in Nepaul, deprived the British empire of a star of the first magnitude.

Now, whether it was the memory of these glorious events, or some other equally martial *souvenirs*, I cannot venture to say; but certain it is, that a most pugnacious spirit began to evince itself, about this time, amongst a portion of our detachment which the gentle reader will the least suspect of such a propensity. The petticoats, in short, were in a state of commotion: the women and children, to the number of

two hundred, were in open and most flagrant mutiny, which came to a head, and exploded two days' march beyond Vellore.

As usual, nobody suspected anything of the matter. We all slept soundly in peace and quietness till about two o'clock in the morning; when, the bugle having sounded, and the soldiers' tents being struck, the sergeant-major entered the commandant's marquee, and duly reported that the women and children, one and all, had refused to march.

"Pooh! pooh!" exclaimed Major Snubley "they are not awake yet, I suppose."

"They are wide awake, sir," said the adjutant's deputy.

"Are they mad or drunk, then?" demanded the major, petulantly.

"Drunk they are not, sir," was the reply; "but mad they certainly may be."

"The dog-star rages!" exclaimed the major, as he got out of bed, and fumbled on his clothes in the dark.

"The stars are all down, sir," said the chief of the non-commissioned; "but it will soon be daylight."

"Now," resumed the major, half soliloquizing, "what would Purseram Bhow do on such an occasion as this?—I know—I have it—strike their tents, to be sure, and then the jades must either march, or get a *coup de soleil*."

"We have tried that, sir," replied the sergeant-major; "but they have beaten off the lascars."

"Ho, sahib," said the *maistry* of the tent-pitchers, sidling into the marquee, "one devil woman break my head with a mallet."

"And anoder knock me down with a tent-peg," cried his deputy.

Eight or ten lascars now pushed their way into the major's presence, each complaining of some outrage or other.

"Are the men under arms, sergeant-major?" demanded the commandant, in a voice of stern authority.

"They are, sir," replied the sergeant-major, "and there isn't a tent-pole standing in the whole camp, except the women's."

"Then, pile arms," said the commandant, "and march the men off in squads to strike the jades' tents, whether they will or no."

The sergeant-major having made the usual salute, retired to obey his orders; and the commandant continued his toilet, soliloquizing every now and then, as he proceeded, on the dogged and stubborn nature of the European, particularly the English female, as compared with the gentle pliability of the Asiatic; but expressing his resolution to carry matters with a high hand on such an occasion as the present, when an example of insubordination was set so fatal to the discipline of the British army, and which Purseram Bhow would deal with in the most summary manner.

Here the major's soliloquy was interrupted by an immense shout from the women's tents, which were always pitched by themselves at a certain distance from the men's; but the shout was of so dubious a character, that the major could not exactly make out whether it was one of defiance or of victory. It was, in fact, a mingled mass of sounds, screams, cries, groans, and laughter, such as probably never awoke the echoes of that locality before or since.

"What on earth is the meaning of this uproar?" demanded the astonished Snubley.

"'Tis the women again, sir," replied the sergeant-major, rushing in. "They have tripped up the men with the tent-ropes, in the dark, and they are tying them neck and heels with their apron-strings."

"Impossible, sir!" cried the commandant, pale with ire. "English soldiers would never suffer themselves to be so treated by a parcel of drunken beldames."

"However that may be, sir," replied the sergeant-major, "there they are, tumbling over one another in the dark, and not a tent struck, nor likely to be."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Snubley. "Where on earth is Lieutenant Croker? He's always out of the way when I want him. Off in the jungle, I suppose, shooting wild boars or boa-constrictors."

"I'll go and look for him, sir," said the sergeant-major, rushing out.

Croker and I, with shame I must acknowledge, were enjoying the fun at a little distance, utterly regardless of the major's quandary; when an orderly stumbled upon us, in the dark, and summoned Croker to head-quarters.

"By Jupiter! then," exclaimed Croker, as he went off laughing, "I'll tell him the whole secret of the matter."

I followed to witness this interesting *éclaircissement*, and took post at the door of the major's tent.

"Oh, you are come at last, sir!" cried Snubley, with an explosion of pent-up wrath.

"I came the moment you sent for me, major," replied Croker. "I couldn't think of intruding before, under the circumstances."

"Oh, I know what you mean, sir," said the major, "by laying such an emphasis on the word 'circumstances.' Of, that, more hereafter; but I now demand of you the meaning of this uproar, which, I shame to say, may be heard above the Ghauts."

"Well, then," replied Croker, "if you must know the truth, it's all along of Zuleikha Beebee."

"What dat you say, Croke Sahib?" demanded a shrill voice, as a female head was protruded from behind a curtain that hung at one end of the marquee.

"I say, 'tis all along of you, Beebee Zuleikha," repeated Croker. "The women swear they won't have you for a commanding officer any longer."

"You mind your eye, Croke Sahib!" cried the lady, in a passion. "I give you de slipper in your head."

Here, an angry and discordant trio ensued, in which all spoke together, and in double alto. But, as the reader could learn nothing from such a *galimatias*, I must play Chorus on the occasion, and unravel the mystery for him.

It appears, then, that Major Snubley, when we commenced this unpropitious march, had invited and prevailed upon a Mussulman lady, of some personal attractions, to travel to Bangalore under his protection. This fair being, without a soul, whose name, like that of

Potiphar's wife, was Zuleikha, embalmed in the lyric verse of Hafiz, was somewhat portly in person, with large gazelle eyes, whose apparent magnitude was still further increased by the application of kohol round the lids; while her teeth were duly blackened and polished, and her lips, fingers, and toes, died with henna. She was, as I have said, somewhat portly in person; and, as she walked, according to the recommendation of Eastern poets, with the stately majesty of the elephant, or the phenicopteros, she set jingling, at every step she took, about a hundred and fifty little bells and silver trinkets, distributed over various parts of her person; her ears carrying five distinct tiers of ornaments, and her nose-ring being as large in circumference as the hoop of an oyster-barrel.

This delectable creature travelled in a very handsome hackery, drawn by two snow-white Brahminy bulls with magnificent humps. The canopy of this four-sided carriage, on two wheels, was composed of rich damask, with a gilt ball on the top. It was supported by four silver-plated pillars, between which green silk curtains being extended, shaded from the vulgar gaze, and the sun's rude assaults, the charming occupant who sat cross-legged within.

So distinguished a personage, travelling, moreover, with all the prestige of the commandant's lady, could, of course, occupy only one position in the line of march: this was at the head of the long, long column of hackeries, bandies, bullocks, and camp-followers that brought up the rear of the fighting men, who, like the army of Xerxes, numbered only one-tenth of the sum total. This pre-eminence was submitted to quietly enough, for some time, by the soldier's wives; till the demon of discord began to hint amongst them, that it was highly derogatory for Englishwomen, Christian women, ay, and honest women to boot, to follow like so many menials in the train of a black, or at least a brown, pagan of the feminine gender, who was, moreover, and above all, no better than she ought to be.

No sooner was this idea once broached, than it took like wild-fire; and the only wonder now was, that the degradation had been brooked so long. At first, the discontented matrons thought of gaining their point by an expedient of their own, and endeavoured to circumvent the enemy by getting before her on the line of march; but Zuleikha Beebee was wide-awake to the perils that beset her dignity, and was always half an hour before them at the post of honour. Foiled in this attempt, they next had recourse to hints, innuendoes, invectives, and downright insults; but, ensconced behind her green silk curtains, Zuleikha Beebee was impenetrable to their attacks, and regardless of the pressure from without. Driven at last to desperation, the British fair ones mutually vowed to support each other in a struggle for their rights; and, declaring war, *à l'outrance*, the scene above described was the glorious result.

"To cut this matter short," exclaimed Major Snubley, at the end of a stormy debate, "I order you, Lieutenant Croker, to go and quell this disturbance, and I place the whole detachment in your hands for that purpose. Lieutenant Blake, you'll stay with me, as a guard of honour, in case the wretches should attack my person."

"But don't you think now, Zuleikha Beebee," said Croker, in a

soothing voice, "that if you would only be so kind as to go a little in the rear of the line——"

"Bah! bah!" interrupted the lady, stamping her elephantine leg upon the ground with a degree of energy that set all her trinkets tinkling, like the bells of the Chinese porcelain tower in a squall. "You no tink I do dat business, Croke Sahib?"

"Only for a day," insinuated Croker, "just to pacify them for the moment."

"No, nor for tree day," replied the lady, "nor for one week, nor for twelve year. No proper business for Musselmaun Beebee to ride after Dobee women."

"But English woman say," persisted Croker, "not proper business for Moor woman go first; sepoys always go last in line of march."

"More fool he!" replied Zuleikha; "but dat not my fashion. I always cock-o'-de-walk. When I travel wid Captain-ee-Smith, of Nizam army, I always ride him elephant, and nobody say, 'Bo! you goose!'"

"You see how it is," said poor Snubley, shrugging his shoulders. "She won't yield, and I cannot blame her."

"I should tink not," said the lady. "If you do, you one old fool. Captain-ee-Smith was de proper man; he soon blow 'em up."

"And so would Purseram Bhow," cried Snubley. "And so will I; but, first of all, Croker, you go, my dear fellow, and see if you can settle the matter peaceably for us."

Croker went accordingly; and as he strode along, his tall, gaunt figure cast a shadow of portentous length, for it was now broad daylight, and the sun was showing his fiery disc above the horizon.

With all the anxiety of our Vienna diplomatists, awaiting the ultimatum of a truculent bully, who feels, or fancies, he has the game in his hands, Major Snubley and I awaited the return of our envoy: nor were we kept long in suspense; for, after another shout of scorn and defiance, we beheld Croker flying from the triumphant foe, holding his handkerchief to his face. In another moment he was in the tent, displaying to our horrified gaze his visage streaming with blood, that issued from ten distinct furrows dug into his features by the nails of some mutinous fury.

"By Jupiter! now, Major Snubley," exclaimed Croker, "you only say the word, and I'll fight any ten black fellows that ever were pupped; but I'll be sniggered if ever I go near those devils of women again."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Zuleikha. "You put Dobee women before me! See what dey give you now for tanks!"

"'Tis six of one, and half a dozen of another," retorted Croker. "You are all the same sort of cattle."

"You call me one cattle!" cried Zuleikha, springing forward; and, snatching off her slipper with wonderful dexterity, she gave poor Croker such a smack with it on the lips, as drew forth some more of his heroic blood.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Snubley, "what on earth am I to do amongst you all? Never was any one so beset as I am, since the days of Purseram Bhow."

"You one foolish old man," said Zuleikha. "Captain-ee-Smith was de proper fellow for dat business: he soon settle de hash of 'em."

"So can I too," said the commandant, proudly; "but we must first try the effect of diplomacy and tactic. Stay—I have it—we'll starve the jades: they're too well fed, that's the fact of it. Sergeant-major, order the *cornicopola** to go forward a day in advance; we will then march, and leave the nasty sluts to starve behind us. Hunger will soon bring them to their senses," said Snubley, rubbing his hands in high glee at the idea.

"They're beforehand with us there, sir," replied the sergeant-major. "They have got the *cornicopola* a prisoner in their tents, and swear they'll brain him, if he attempts to escape."

"But his people," said the commandant, "can move on with the cattle."

"I have tried that, also," said the sergeant-major; "but they wont budge a foot without him."

"Good gracious! I'm at my wit's end," cried poor Snubley, wringing his hands, and looking the very picture of despair. "Blake, my dear fellow, you go and try what effect you can produce. Palaver them, my dear boy; promise them everything."

"No, no!" cried Zuleikha; "not everyting, you old fuzool!"

"I meant to say, everything but that," resumed the poor major, drawing in his horns.

I accordingly set off on my mission, but with very little hopes of success. Warned, however, by Croker's mishap, I resolved to try the soothing system; and approached the enemy's position with smiling looks, waving a white cambric handkerchief as a symbol of peace.

I was greatly amused, as I drew nigh, at the military aspect of affairs. The women's camp occupied a slightly elevated ground; and the tents, twelve in number, were pitched close together, in a solid square of cotton, the tent ropes being so interlaced and intermingled, as to defy the ingress of all but the most practised of *clashies*. In the centre, was elevated a tall bamboo, from the summit of which a petticoat fluttered in the breeze. Quarter and rear-guards were established, and sentries marched backwards and forwards with mops and broomsticks over their shoulders; while a battery of pails and buckets filled with water, by no means deodorized, stood ready for immediate action; and the young fry scampered about as scouts, to give timely notice of the proceedings of the enemy.

A deputation of a dozen of the most staid and elderly matrons came forward to receive my communication, and I addressed them in my most fascinating manner.

"My dear, good, worthy souls," I began.

But this exordium was received with a stunning peal of laughter, which interposed an abstacle *in limine*, as the logicians say, that I could not get over; and I stood for a moment or two, stammering and unable to proceed; at length,

"Why don't you go on?" cried one.

"There's a hole in his ballad," said another.

* The meat contractor, who always accompanies troops to the field with droves of cattle and flocks of sheep.

"I never saw a bashful Irishman before," said a third.

"You're a pretty fellow for a Tipperary boy," said a fourth.

"He's Cork, darlint," said a fifth. "Don't you see he has kissed the Blarney-stone."

"I'll engage," said a sixth, "he's got a big lump of it in his pocket."

"I say, young man," cried a lady from Westminster, "does your mother know you're out?"

"Give her my compliments when you write," said another, "and ask her, has she sold her mangle?"

Much more of this chaffing I underwent, till one huge matron, with a mob-cap flapping about her ears, that made her look like Abdel-Kader, as that gallant chieftain is represented in our print-shops, exclaimed:—

"Be off wid you now, Paddy Blake, or I'll mark your baby-face as I did that gomeril Croker's."

Totally abashed by this shower of threats and witticisms, I was about to retire, looking very sheepish, I confess; when the whole pack of them surrounded me, in three distinct circles of young and old, hand in hand; dancing with more energy than grace to the old nursery rhyme, which was most provokingly appropriate to the occasion—

"Rings on her fingers, bells on her toes,
She will have music wherever she goes."

The kind reader will, I hope, pardon my vanity; but, in the excitement of the moment, I could not help comparing myself to Orpheus about to be sacrificed to the fury of the Thracian matrons. I escaped, however, the fright; for, after indulging some time in their saturnalia, they opened out and allowed me to retire, as the saying is, with my finger in my mouth, contenting themselves with pinning a rag to my coat-skirts; and, all unconscious of the honour, I marched back through the camp and into the head-quarter marquee with this respectable appendage dangling at my tail.

Matters were now proceeding from bad to worse; and the major began to anticipate serious consequences to himself, if the mutiny was not immediately checked. The women, however, positively refused to stir, if the Beebee was not sent to her proper place at the end of the column of hackeries; and the Beebee, with a stupendous polyglot oath, declared she would not relinquish the post of honour. In this dilemma, there was but one alternative,—to send Zuleikha back to Madras, till happier times: and the major, having screwed his courage to the sticking-place, imparted the sad news to her; which produced a terrible scene of tears, faintings, hysterics, and invectives. She declared, however, that she couldn't think of going by herself, there being plenty of robbers on the road to take her trinkets from her, and perhaps her life—Thuggism being then very common. Upon this, the major ordered his dubash to attend her, but Ram Samee flatly refused the office: he was no *Burwah*, he said, but a high-caste Brahmin, and it was not proper business for him to do. Indignant at this refusal, the major discharged his dubash; and Zuleikha was prevailed on by a very handsome present, to venture her precious person alone on the journey.

These arrangements being made, all obstacles were at length obviated; the women got into their hackeries, their tents were struck and sent forward, and though the sun was already high in the heavens, we commenced our march.

"Halt! halt!" cried the major, before we had proceeded fifty paces on our way. "Mr. Croker, countermarch the detachment; here is another confounded piece of business!"

We accordingly took up our former position, and began to think ourselves spell-bound to the spot.

The major, it seems, had no sooner got into his palanquin, than he found there wasn't a humaul to carry him: they had all gone off with Ram Samee. Poor Snubley, in this predicament, ordered his horse to be saddled; but there was neither a ghorawallah nor a grass-cutter to be found. His maty-boy had also vanished, together with his gardener, his hookah-burdar, his doby-walla, his lascars;—all, in short, having been hired by the dubash, went away with him, and left the real master on the camp-field, alone with his glory!

This being a predicament which admitted of no possible remedy save one—we had all to hunt about for the wily Brahmin; who, after putting our patience to a severe test, at length suffered himself to be found, and was reinstated in his former functions. All difficulties being thus obviated, we finally left this unlucky camp, the triumphant dubash remarking with a sly leer:—

"Good ting master come to him senses. S'pose Major Sahib not know when good servant got, Ram Samee know when got good master."

A few days after this, we ascended the Pednadurgum Pass, one of those stupendous defiles that lead to the table-land of India; and another week's march brought us, without further adventures, to the cantonment of Bangalore.

CHAPTER LV

THE CANTONMENT.

A CANTONMENT in India is altogether so different from our military establishments in Europe, that the reader will, perhaps, be gratified with a brief sketch of Bangalore, which will give him an adequate idea of all the others.

The European infantry barracks, the centre, or nucleus of this cantonment, stand on a level plain, spacious enough for the manœuvres of four thousand men. These barracks form a great quadrangle of large airy rooms, one story high, with verandahs facing inwards; capable of lodging fifteen hundred men, exclusive of officers, whose quarters are elsewhere. At some distance in rear of these barracks stands a great bazaar or market; and in front of them, on the opposite side of a vast esplanade, or parade-ground, extend the officers' bungalows, ranged in rows, intersected by streets or roads running in parallel and perpendicular lines. Each bungalow stands within a spacious compound, or garden, laid out in parterres: these are planted

with fruit-trees and flowering shrubs, and separated from the contiguous compounds by hedges of milk-bush, cactus, and bamboo, or other vegetable production of rapid growth and impervious nature peculiar to the climate.

To the right and left of the infantry barracks before mentioned, extend the bungalows of the Company's officers; together with the lines of the native cavalry and infantry regiments, situated amongst topes of cocoanut and other trees, where the sepoys and their families live in clay-built huts, constructed either by themselves or their predecessors. At a little distance to the eastward, but within the cantonment lines, are spacious barracks for a European light dragoon regiment, surrounded in like manner by the officers' bungalows; and beyond these extends a fine level racecourse, forming part of an arid and uncultivated plain many square miles in extent.

After our long march through a wild, and, in many places, a desert country, the verdant and highly improved aspect of Bangalore was extremely refreshing to us; and gave us a foretaste of those pleasures which it is always in the power of large congregated masses of troops to command. We marched in with all the honours, the splendid band of my new regiment playing before us; while a number of the officers, who had come out to meet us, pranced and caracoled their beautiful Arab and Coorg horses around in all directions, determined, as it were, to "witch" the griffins with "noble horsemanship."

I must pass over the warm greetings between the fair part of our detachment and their husbands, sons, and brothers, who all flocked out to receive them after so long a separation; in order to mention that my own reception by my new associates was of that warm and brotherly character which is nowhere to be met with but in the army.

Several of them contended for the pleasure, as they were good enough to call it, of giving me a share of their quarters; and at last I accepted the hospitality of two young fellows, for they generally went in couples, whose bungalow was sufficiently capacious to accommodate an additional tenant. There, after a pleasant bath, and an excellent breakfast, I sat for some time smoking my hookah, surrounded by fresh squads in succession, all being anxious to have a chat with one so recently from the Peninsula; and before the day was out, the name of Percy Blake was as familiar in the mouths of these Orientals, as ever it had been with the old Apple-greens, or the Light Brigade.

Croker, who had taken up his quarters with an old chum, having called for me about eleven, we went to pay our respects to the colonel, whom I had not yet seen.

"By Jupiter, Percy," said this original, as he stalked onwards, throwing his long limbs in all directions, "you're such a tight-built fellow that the colonel will fall in love with you immediately."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Oh! you'll see fast enough," said Croker, with a chuckle; "but I don't think you'll wear that battalion epaulette much longer."

We entered the compound of Lieutenant-Colonel McClish, which

displayed all the neatness and precision of an old bachelor. It was situated on the esplanade, within view of the barracks, and was laid out with great taste and beauty; abounding in every species of ornamental vegetable in which the East is so prolific: while the guava, the plantain, the pomegranate, the custard-apple, and many other fruit-trees of small size and dimensions, all in full bearing, offered their tempting products to the passing stranger. The bungalow was a perfect epitome of Eastern luxury and comfort. It all lay on the ground-floor, and was covered with a heavy thatch; which, though it harbours snakes and other reptiles, is best calculated for repelling the intense heat. The rooms were shaded from the sun by broad verandahs, whose pillars were enwreathed with a variety of beautiful creepers; while the walls and floors were covered with white chunam, polished with all the brilliancy of Parian marble; and a handsome punkah in the central, or sitting apartment, spread a delicious breeze through the whole.

"'Tis all very nice," said Croker, observing my admiration; "but 'tis all for his own and sole enjoyment. He's a niggardly, selfish old hunk, that has never even given so much as a regimental tiffin."

We found the colonel and the adjutant walking to and fro in one of the verandahs, and I was presented in due form; having to all appearance, as Croker prophesied, made a very favourable impression.

My new commandant was a small, spare, weazen-faced man; with a foxy wig and little ferret eyes, expressive of cold distrust and selfish cunning. After the customary salutations, rendered on his part in a sharp Scottish accent, he honoured me with a particular scrutiny; as he would a young horse he was about to purchase, exclaiming at length aside to the adjutant:

"'Gad Ameety! he'll do, I'm thinking. He's quite a Polly Belvedere. Tell me, sir, have you ever been a Light Bob, eh?"

"I have never been anything else, colonel," was my reply.

"'Gad Ameety! I thoct so," he resumed. "Show me your leg, sir, show me your leg."

I stretched out my leg accordingly, but this was not enough.

"Tighten your troosers, sir, about the knee-pan," cried this original critic of fine forms; "let me see the atomy of your limb, sir. The kilt, noo, wad be the thing; but these trews, or troosers, as ye ca' 'em, are a great construction to the ee-seet, and that's a fac'."

Having complied with the colonel's wish in this particular, he exclaimed:—

"That'll do, sir! Ye'll do, mon! Ye're as clean-built as a Highlandman; that's a fac'. Hoo tall may ye be? I'll wager five feet nine, or thereabout—the vara thing. Can ye jump, sir? Can ye rin? Can ye put the stone and pitch the bar?"

I satisfied the colonel on one of these points, at least, by jumping backwards and forwards over his palankin, which stood before the verandah.

"That'll do, sir," cried the colonel, in high glee. "'Gad Ameety, mon, but ye're a clipper, and that's a fac'. Mr. Standish (turning to the adjutant), post Mr. Blake to the Light Company, sir. And hear

to me, Mr. Blake;—get yourself wings, sir, and a sabre, and all the other paraphersalia of a Light Bob. Gad Ameety, mon! ye maunna be stookit down amang the flat feet: that's a fac'."

I made my acknowledgments to the colonel, and told him that he had crowned the summit of my ambition.

"Vera weel, sir, vera weel," replied the colonel. "Ye ken right weel hoo to acknowledge an obligation, sir; that's a fac'. Ye hae been weel brocht up, sir. Hae ye been in fashionable life, sir? Hae ye seen much o' Lunnun?"

"A good deal, sir," I replied, "in the intervals of service."

"Ah! that's the place to gang tull," said the colonel, "for *boto* and *bomunday*. But a mon must hae plenty o' siller in his poke; that's a fac'. Nae mon can gang to Lunnun withoot."

"But what are poor fellows to do, colonel, who have no money in their pockets," demanded Croker.

"Let them grin and bear it, sir," replied the colonel, with a frown at their presumption; "let them grin and bear it. Sic-like folk should stay at hame, and roast their shins at the fire. Ha! ha! ha! that's a fac'."

The adjutant, Croker, and I, having, as in duty bound, echoed the colonel's laugh, the great man became facetious on the strength of his witticism.

"An hoo's a' wi' ye, Meester Croker?" he exclaimed, with a gracious smile. "Gad Ameety, mon! but ye're ganging up tull the vara sennit, ye're sae tall, mon."

"I hope I'll do for the grenadiers now, colonel," said Croker.

"Ae, mon, that's anither affair," said the colonel, with a sudden chill on his facetious mood. "Ye're sae ungainly, sir, with thae legs and arms. Gad Ameety! ye look like twa halberts badly tied together; and that's a fac. But what the deil's the matter wi' your face, mon? Hae ye had a young teeger aboot y'ere lugs in the jungle, eh?"

Here Croker gave the colonel an account of the mutiny: touching, however, very delicately on the cause of it.

"The rampaging wild beasts!" cried the colonel, in a passion. "See if I don't give 'em a quid for a quod. An sae the puir major was obleeged to part with his *sherrymee*, and to travel *soleas cum soleas*, like the fellow that lost his wife at the siege of Troy. But here he comes, and I must quizzify him a leetle on the *fox pass* he made with that *bony roby*. Good morning to ye, gentlemen, we shall meet again at dinner. *Ory vory*, as we say in France."

We accordingly made our bow, and retired.

"He has made a Light Bob of you," said Croker, with a grin. "That cost him nothing; but he'd see you at Jericho before he offered you a glass of sangaree or a slice of water-melon."

From the residence of Colonel McClish, Croker and I sauntered down to the mess-room, where we had an excellent tiffin with a large party of the prime spirits of the cantonment, King's, Company's, and civilians; for in this last category we had some young fellows enjoying situations in the vicinity, as collectors, jungle-judges, &c., of two or three thousand a year, whose incomes a few months before did not amount to as many farthings. Tiffin was succeeded by billiards,

quoits, blind-hookey, and other games that did not require much exertion, till parade-time; when, having gone through the ceremony of falling in and out, I was well mounted by a brother officer, and we had a gallop on the race-course till eight o'clock, when we rode home to dinner.

This meal, in India, though abundant and luxurious, is but sparingly partaken of in general, the appetite being sufficiently satisfied at tiffin, to which all sit down in white jackets and unrestrained conviviality: but the *après-dîner*, with the incentives of delicious fruit, excellent wines, and agreeable chat, is frequently prolonged to the small hours. At five o'clock the following morning we were under arms again, and manœuvred on the race-course, in brigade, till nine, when a good substantial breakfast awaited us at our respective bungalows. Such, with the occasional intervention of guards, courts-martial, and courts of inquiry, was the ordinary routine of our life at Bangalore.

Though life in India is sufficiently monotonous, for want of those varied and abundant materials which make up the sum of European society, we exerted ourselves with tolerable success at Bangalore to push old Time gaily on his course. The ladies of the cantonment were not very numerous, but they were sociable; and with their assistance and co-operation we got up a succession of balls, concerts, pic-nics, and equestrian excursions, which greatly enhanced the general enjoyment. Nay, we built a theatre, of which I was nominated architect, manager, and poet in ordinary. From amongst the privates and non-commissioned officers of my regiment, I selected a very respectable *corps dramatique*; half a dozen young drummers and band-boys being drilled to perform the female characters. After overcoming a thousand and one obstacles, we commenced a very prosperous season with the comedy of "John Bull," and the farce of "Raising the Wind," the house being crowded to the ceiling by an enraptured audience, and an opening address from my pen received with unbounded applause.

Then we had excellent races, and abundance of shooting in the neighbouring jungle, which extends for miles and miles round Savindroog, and several other hill forts that lie between Bangalore and Seringapatam. The rajah of Mysore, also, our interesting *protégé*, who, on the fall of Tippoo, had been raised to the musnud by the arms of Great Britain from the humble position of a chatty-maker, having visited our cantonment, ordered a splendid race-stand and racket-court to be built for us; and occasionally sent us half a dozen tigers in trap-cages, to be hunted on the race-course. At this amusement I became very expert: there were few, even amongst our light dragoon and native cavalry regiments, that could spear a tiger with greater dexterity than Percy Blake; and no one ever drew forth more rapturous applause from the fashionable occupants of the race-stand.

Then, again, when any fair dame was in want of a beau or an escort, the dashing young Light Bob, who kept his brace of Arabs and rode and won his own races, was the chosen *preux*. In all matters of amusement, in all points of taste, he was the general umpire: in

short, nothing could be done without Percy Blake; whether the object was the building of a ball-room, the arrangement of a gorgeous entertainment, or a mere shopping excursion to the godown of Peter Boxley.

This worthy, a little punchy half-cast, had taken up an excellent position in the very centre of our lines: there, a spacious compound having been allotted to him, for the general convenience, he had built a vast godown, or warehouse, and stocked it well with every imaginable article of European or Chinese manufacture, which he renewed and refreshed on the arrival of every fleet at Madras.

In this grand emporium might be seen and obtained, on short notice and long credit, all manner of creature comforts—hams, tongues, Bengal humps, Colchester oysters, caviare from the Mediterranean, edible birds' nests from the land of Confucius, wines, brandies, Hollands, and double stout; all mixed up and mingled with hats, caps, coats, shoes, boots, and stockings; every article of ladies' finery, from a hair-pin to a casket of jewels; and everything belonging to the masculine gender, from a shoe-tie to a general's aigulette. Never did mortal eye look upon so miscellaneous an assortment; never did the fancy rove, pleased and bewildered, amidst such a profusion of tempting objects; where the blind goddess seemed to have emptied her cornucopia at the feet of her joyous and reckless worshippers.

Thither was Percy Blake invariably summoned by his fair adherents on the arrival of every new fleet at Madras; and as, at that period, we were in the midst of a tremendous European war, when ships never ventured to sea without convoy; and when, moreover, free-trade had not been so much as dreamt of, these events were few and far between, our means of obtaining fresh supplies being limited to the periodical advent of the Company's fleets. This, of course, increased the eagerness with which every one rushed to Peter Boxley's the moment he announced the opening of his goods; and for several days his godown was crammed to suffocation, ladies and gentlemen jostling and struggling with each other in a manner that never was surpassed anywhere but at the Free-trade Bazaar in Covent Garden Theatre, which my readers have doubtless not yet forgotten.

Then might be heard the silver sound of female voices in accents such as these:—"Mr. Blake, how do you like this?" "Dear Mr. Blake, don't you admire that?" intermingled with the rougher sounds of, "I say, Percy Blake, my wife's dying to have your opinion of a crape shawl;" or, "Blake Sahib, colonel lady want speak you five minutes—only five minutes, sahib." In short, if incessant activity and universal consideration could constitute happiness, I might at this period be set down as the happiest fellow in India.

CHAPTER LVI.

MY NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE.

BUT, alas ! there was a thorn in my breast that embittered all this enjoyment ; and the reader, perhaps, anticipates its nature, if he has not already begun to accuse me of heartless insensibility and a recreant forgetfulness of the first devoir of every accomplished cavalier.

I had written repeatedly to Julia ; addressing my letters under cover to her uncle, being unacquainted with her address, or with any better mode of transit ; but I had never received a single line in return. None of my letters, however, were sent back, from which I concluded that they must have reached their destination ; and the silence with which they were treated induced a bitter suspicion that Julia was unfaithful to her vows. The agony occasioned by this thought was at first so overwhelming, that for many days I gave myself up to despair, and secluded myself altogether from society. Time, though it blunted the edge of my affliction, failed, however, to restore the serenity of my mind. I became moping and melancholy ; gave up my former pursuits, and retired from the busy scene in which I had long played so distinguished a part : as a natural consequence, I was superseded in the world of fashion by one who was more zealous in its service, and more willing to minister to its wants and wishes.

It being generally considered that my secession was occasioned by a total failure of pecuniary resources, which in India is held to be the only legitimate and irremediable cause of unhappiness, I was speedily tabooed by the proud, the selfish, and the unfeeling ; and all who know the world will admit that these constitute the vast majority of what is called fashionable life. It is astonishing with what rapidity a man who gets into this predicament falls into utter insignificance. It was not my case, it is true ; but being too proud or too indolent to undeceive my former friends and adherents, the result to me was the same : from admiration they fell to pity, from pity to contempt ; and ere long the name of Percy Blake, once the talisman that opened every heart in Bangalore, had passed into the category of unpronounceable vulgarities.

About this time, Lieutenant-General Sir Nicholas Pipkin was appointed to the command of this division of the Madras army, and arrived at Bangalore, where a spacious and elegant mansion was fitted up for his accommodation. His predecessor having been an old bachelor, the change was hailed with pleasure, Pipkin being a married man, and consequently more likely to contribute to the general enjoyment. All the world was, therefore, agog to pay him and his lady every possible attention ; and the commandant's mansion was constantly crowded with visitors, as eager as the Parsees themselves in their adoration of the rising sun.

Two or three of my intimate friends, the only persons who now took any interest in my fate, pressed me to call amongst the rest: they said it was an essential piece of etiquette; they even insisted on it as a point of duty, to fail in which would be looked upon as singular, if not resented as an impertinence. Their remonstrances, however, were of no avail: society had become so utterly distasteful to me, that man delighted me not, nor woman either; and to get rid of their importunities, I put myself on the sick-list with an imaginary complaint, to which my melancholy visage gave but too colourable a pretence.

For a long time, I secluded myself within my compound, brooding over the wreck of all my hopes, occasioned by the infidelity of Julia, of which I could now entertain no doubt. The only enjoyment I indulged in, was a solitary walk of an evening, when the fervours of the day were over, and the moon, rising in a pure and cloudless sky, shed a silvery radiance, unequalled in any other part of the world, over a scene of rustic tranquillity. The direction I generally took, was towards a beautiful piece of water, called Lady Clive's Tank; embosomed in a splendid tope of mango, tamarind, and cocoanut-trees, about two miles from the cantonment; and here, throwing off my clothes, I was accustomed to swim about for an hour or two before I returned to my hermitage.

One evening on my way to this solitary spot, while immersed in deep rumination on my future destiny, I was startled by the galloping of horses in my front; and looking forward, I could discern by the brilliant moonlight, that it was a riding-party returning to the cantonment.

As they rapidly approached, I plunged into the deep shadow of a mango-tree, to avoid observation; and found it was several officers and ladies, apparently in a hurry to get home in time for dinner. As they passed me in full sweep with their ghorawallas panting after them, the moonlight was so brilliant that I felt no difficulty in recognizing the party, though myself screened from view. But, O heavens! O earth! what was my astonishment—my ecstacy, when, in the very last lady of the *cortége* who was chatting and laughing with an aide-de-camp that cantered by her side, I plainly and distinctly recognized my Julia; paler than when I last saw her, but the same matchless features, sweet expression, and bewitching smile!

I was confounded, I was thunderstruck for a moment; but when I came to my recollection, I started off in full chase after them, with a speed and energy which few at that time could surpass. It was in vain, however; I was beaten hollow, distanced; and long before I reached the cantonment I had lost every trace of my adorable mistress.

What was now to be done? Fifty methods rushed into my mind at once for discovering the locale of my divinity; but the most obvious was to question one of her riding-party: they were all, however, either staff or cavalry men, and were then, of course, at their respective messes. I had, therefore, nothing for it but to wait, Heaven knows with what impatience, till morning, for the gratification of my excruciating curiosity.

I did all I could, however, to advance my object: I wrote to the surgeon to report me fit for duty; ordered my dubash to get my regimentals ready for parade; abused him for not being quicker in his motions; threw myself on my couch; tried, but in vain, to sleep, and faithfully counted every stroke of the gong, as it came booming over the esplanade, till the hour of four. Then I started from my sleepless bed, hurried on my clothes and accoutrements, and rushed towards the barracks; where I enjoyed the frescoe, by myself, for at least half an hour before the first bugle sounded.

Every one was glad to see me on parade once more; and congratulated me on getting out of the pickling-tub, as they called it.

"You are just in time for the ball," said one.

"I shouldn't wonder," said another, "if that's what brought him out to-day."

"What ball?" I asked. "I have not so much as heard of one."

"Sir Nicholas and Lady Pipkin 'at home' to all the world to-night," said a third; "you'll go, of course."

Here the bugle sounded, and we fell in.

During parade, it occurred to me that a ball given to all the world would be the most likely place to find my Julia; for she, the "cynosure" of all eyes, would, of course, be one of its principal attractions. As my impatience, however, would not brook the ordinary occupations of the day, I mounted my horse after breakfast, and galloped into the jungle; whose mazy labyrinth stretched for many a mile westward of the fort of Bangalore. Here I wandered for hours, amongst the sylvan scenery and rocky eminences of this woodland region; indulging in day-dreams of my approaching bliss, and picturing to myself the delight I should feel in once more gazing unobstructed on the eyes of my beloved, inhaling her balmy breath, and drinking into my enraptured ears the melody of her voice, as she ingenuously accounted for her silence to my letters, and renewed her vows of never-dying affection.

Lamartine calls this indulgence in imaginary bliss, the suicide of happiness! Alas!

The sun was descending towards the western horizon, when I returned to the cantonment in time to dress for the evening.

As the reader will readily imagine, I ate very little dinner; and I was so abstracted, that I answered many questions at random, to the general amusement. The colonel, making use of one of his big words, said I appeared to be in a perfect state of constipation, and that my thoughts must be in *cælum quivus*.

I got off, however, at an early hour, with three or four others, who seemed desirous of dancing themselves into the staff, a thing by no means uncommon in India; and we arrived at the general's mansion just as the band were tuning their instruments for the first set of quadrilles. We made our bow to Sir Nicholas, a little punchy old man with a bald head and a copper nose, who received us courteously, and said we should find Lady Pipkin at the other end of the room.

"Come along, Blake," said Captain Johnson, "I'll introduce you to her ladyship; I don't think you have seen her yet."

"Oh, bother Lady Pipkin for an old frump!" I replied. "I am in search of more attractive metal."

"Old frump!" exclaimed Johnson, staring at me with evident surprise; "what can you possibly mean?"

But, without stopping to answer him, I pushed on in pursuit of my divinity; elbowing and jostling everybody, with very little ceremony, and scarcely waiting to apologize for my rudeness.

The quadrilles were now forming, and the band about to strike up, when I reached the upper end of the room; where, to my delight, within a few paces of me stood my Julia, ready to lead off, with an old jungle judge for her partner.

I stood for an instant to gaze upon her who now constituted the sum total of my earthly bliss. Her dress was splendid; she was one blaze of diamonds, but her native charms far outshone their factitious splendour. Her bosom heaved, as it were impatient for the dance, as she smiled archly at some remark of her partner's. An aide-de-camp, who stood behind her, clapped his hands thrice; the first *coup d'archet* was given, and her pretty little foot protruded from her white satin jupe, when her eye caught mine, and with a fearful shriek she staggered forward. Instantly bursting through the amazed dancers, I caught her in my arms, before she fell to the ground, and laid her gently on an ottoman that stood near, while several ladies hastened to her assistance.

All was now one scene of indescribable terror and confusion, every one hurrying to and fro, without knowing what was really the matter; some calling out "fire!" others screaming out "murder!" Meanwhile, I knelt by the side of my insensible Julia, chafing her temples, and reviling myself as the cause of her fright; when suddenly a hand was laid roughly on my shoulder, and a harsh voice exclaimed:—

"Stand aside, sir! stand aside!"

I sprang to my feet, and without taking time to ascertain who the intruder was, I seized him by the collar, and hurled him backwards several paces.

"Good heavens! Mr. Blake," cried one of the ladies, "what are you about? You have pushed away the general from his wife!"

"His wife!" I exclaimed, with a start of frenzy.

"Certainly," said another. "Don't you know Lady Pipkin?"

"Lady Pipkin!" I cried, striking my forehead in agony. "Merciful Heaven! what is to become of me!"

"Step this way, Blake," said Van Beurle, one of the aides-de-camp, taking me kindly by the arm; "I have something particular to say to you."

I accompanied him without knowing why or wherefore, such was the horrible distraction of my thoughts, and when we had got into an antechamber he said,—

"I grieve heartily, my dear fellow, at the communication I have to make to you; which is, that you deliver up your sword, and retire to your quarters in close arrest."

I immediately complied with his demand, and said, "There, Van Beurle, give it to my evil genius; and with it give him my commis-

sion, since he has deprived me of that which alone could make it sweet."

The good-natured aide-de-camp walked down with me to the verandah, and, putting me into his own palanquin, I was carried home more dead than alive.

For three or four days I was in a state of utter distraction, raving incessantly on my Julia, defying her husband to the field, stabbing him in her presence, setting fire to her splendid mansion, and carrying her off amidst the flames. "Gracious heavens," I have often since prayed, "blot for ever from my memory the horrors of that short but unutterable agony!"

During this period, I had locked myself up in my room, and refused to see any one, though several had earnestly prayed for admission. Being, then, released from arrest, I consented to see Croker, who, with his usual insouciance, exclaimed:—

"Oh, by Jupiter, Percy! you're always putting your foot in it—but this was even worse than shooting a man and a monkey. What on earth could tempt you, now, to kiss the general's wife before all the company?"

I cast a grim smile on my friend, who went on as before:—

"But did you ever hear of such an old fool as the general made of himself? What do you think he did now, when you were sent off in arrest?"

I shook my head, without replying.

"Oh!" said Croker, "I suppose that means you don't know: then, by Jupiter, I'll tell you. He called for his head dubash, and said to him in a thundering passion, 'Put out the lights! Take back the wine to the godown! Dismiss the band! Ladies and gentlemen, go home!' And home we accordingly went," said Croker.*

In spite of my wretchedness, I couldn't help laughing heartily at this terrible *dénoûment*; and I then learned that Sir Nicholas and his young bride had suddenly departed for Madras. A day or two after, a sealed note was put into my hand by the wife of a brother officer with whom I was intimate.

It ran in fragments, as follows:—

"Farewell for ever, and forgive me—you will—you must, when you hear my sad story.

"They told me you were dead—they said you had fallen by the hand of a friend, whose domestic happiness you had destroyed.

"They had even the cruelty to forge a letter purporting to come from you, on your death-bed—confessing your crime, and praying for forgiveness.

"This letter, the only one, alas! I received from you, accomplished my wretchedness; for, though I afterwards listened to another—still—

(Here a few words were obliterated by a tear.)

"He, however, was not guilty of complicity—his conduct has been always honourable; and is, even now, kind and considerate, though I have told him all.

* This part of the story is a ludicrous fact: the occasion was somewhat different, but the same "*teterrima causa belli*."

“Farewell! If it be any consolation to you to know that you possess my entire and perfect esteem—my—my—be satisfied that you do—I have inquired into, and know all; and shall carry to my grave the sad memory of my cruel, cruel deception.”

CHAPTER LVII.

THE FLANK BATTALION.

For twelve long months after this terrible blow, I led a life of study and seclusion; restricting myself to the society of my own regiment, and the intimacy of two or three sterling fellows who knew how to appreciate the bitter loss I had sustained. Many tried to bring me back to a life of gaiety and dissipation; but my spirits had suffered too severely, and my mind had received a shock from which it was not easy to recover.

My energies, however, did not sink under the infliction; they were only diverted into another channel. I resolved to become an Oriental scholar; for which purpose, I engaged a moonshee, with whom I studied Persian and Hindostanee literature, through the medium of Gilchrist and Sir William Jones. I plunged into the depths of Eastern mythology, till I became lost in the interminable mazes of the Mahabarut and the Ramayuna. I read Todd till I became fascinated with the Rajpoots, and Ferishta till I fancied myself a Mogul. But what was more useful than all, I obtained a fluency in Hindostanee; and could even translate a tale from Ferdusi, or an ode from Hafiz with passable spirit.

During this period, the south of India was in a state of profound peace, though war was raging in Nepaul, where two or three of our generals got shamefully compromised and cut up by their half-savage enemy, till the cautious and able tactics of Sir David Ochterlony turned the tables and vindicated the supremacy of our arms. There was, however, a storm brewing in Central India, which ultimately drew us into its vortex, and gave rise to scenes and events of surpassing interest and vast political importance, which effectually roused me from my lethargy, and rescued my mind from hopeless and incurable stagnation.

The marquis of Hastings, at that time governor-general, having brought the Nepaul war to a successful termination,—or rather Ochterlony having done it for him,—and being ambitious of a loftier fame than any of his predecessors had attained, he plunged into another contest, which frightened his masters quite as much as his enemies. Indeed, it is difficult to say whether the peishwah of the Mahrattas or the Court of Directors was the most reluctant to encounter the terrors of this mighty and expensive struggle.

It is not, of course, my object to trouble the reader with a history of the Mahratta-Pindarrie war, but a very brief summary will be necessary to enable him to follow the narrative of my personal adventures as connected therewith; and beyond this, I promise him

that he need not apprehend any further dry reading from my light, and perhaps too flippant pen.

Bajee Rao, the peishwah and nominal head of all the Mahratta states, had long been suspected of harbouring designs against our eastern empire, in which he was aided and abetted by Holkar, Scindia, and the rajah of Berar; the other chieftains of that powerful confederacy which had overturned the throne of the Mogul, and reduced to subjection the most wealthy and productive districts of Central India. In order to crush this confederacy before its projects were matured, the governor-general called into the field the three armies of the Presidencies; and before the Mahrattas had time to strike a blow, they found themselves hemmed in by the Bengal army on the north-east, the Bombay army on the west, and the army of Madras on the south: all these forces, numbering 110,000 men, admirably disciplined and equipped, together with 20,000 irregular cavalry, supplied by the allies of the Company, converging, as by one common impulse, on the very centre of their dominions.

There was a secondary, but a most important object to be also obtained by this armament, viz., the suppression of the Pindarries,—ruthless bands of robbers and murderers, who had originated many years before in the feuds, changes, and commotions which had so long convulsed the peninsula. These ferocious plunderers had increased in numbers and audacity at different epochs, till they became, as it were, a nomadic nation; sweeping, like flights of locusts, from one end of the Deccan to the other, without fixing anywhere their seat of power; and retiring in the rainy season to their obscure retreats on the banks of the Nerbudda, to enjoy themselves on their ill-gotten spoil, and mature their plans for future incursions.

The Pindarries, we are informed by Sir John Malcolm, were not a distinctive race, but a numerous class of men of different races, religions, and habits, gradually associating, and assimilated by a common pursuit. They were all horsemen and all robbers, who, from obscure freebooters, rose into sufficient consequence to be deemed useful auxiliaries by the different Mahratta powers, whose desultory mode of warfare was suited to their habits. Occasionally, the Mahratta rulers purchased their aid by grants of land, or by a tacit admission of their right to possess tracts which they had already usurped. But the more usual price paid for their assistance was the privilege of plundering, even beyond the ordinary license given to a Mahratta army.

When they set out on a lubhur, or expedition, they placed themselves under the guidance of one or more chosen leaders, called lubhuriahhs, who were selected on account of their knowledge of the country that it was meant to plunder. They never encumbered themselves with tents or baggage; but each horseman carried a few cakes of bread for his own subsistence, and some feeds of grain for his horse. The lubhur, which usually consisted of two or three thousand good horse, with a proportion of mounted followers, advanced at the rapid rate of forty or fifty miles a day; turning neither to the right nor left, till they arrived at their place of destination, where they divided and made a sweep of all the cattle and property

they could find; committing, at the same time, the most horrid atrocities, and destroying what they could not carry off.

One of the peculiarities of these miscreants was, that they never fought when they could run away; deeming it wisdom to plunder and fly, but folly to stay and fight. If pursued, they made marches of extraordinary length, by roads almost impracticable for regular troops; but if overtaken, they dispersed, to reassemble at an appointed rendezvous; and before an adequate force could be brought against them, they were on their return.

Such were these depredators, whose terrible irruptions, which came as regularly year after year as the tempest of the monsoon, the governor-general determined to put down, even at the expense of a long and sanguinary war; while, at the same time, he resolved to reduce the great Mahratta chiefs to such a state of subserviency as would effectually prevent them from ever after conspiring together against the paramount power of the British.

The Madras contingent of the invading army assembled on the river Toombudra, under Sir Nicholas Pipkin, who, to my great mortification, was accompanied to the field by his lady, for I thus unavoidably came in contact with her occasionally, to our mutual embarrassment. These *rencontres*, however, I avoided as much as possible, devoting myself sedulously to my duties, and acquiring ample knowledge of Indian field service, which was subsequently of essential use to me.

But for many months we led a dull and unsatisfactory life. The arrangements of the governor-general not being yet sufficiently matured to admit of our advancing northward, our operations were of a trivial character, and our marches extended no further than from one side of the river to the other, over a sandy soil devoid of vegetation, or amongst heavy cotton grounds, with the thermometer ranging from 110° to 120° in our tents, while our ordinary luxuries, and even comforts, were both scarce and expensive. This state of inaction produced little else than murmuring and discontent amongst us; but one little incident that occurred, while we were thus kept dodging about in the hot winds, may not be unacceptable to the reader.

Captain Cooke, of "Ours," being on the quarter-guard one day when the thermometer stood at 130° in the sun, retired into his tent, and took a short snooze in his regimentals. His post was just then visited by the field-officer of the day, and the guard turning out without their captain, the latter was, of course, loudly called for.

Cooke ran out in a hurry, and being sharply questioned as to the cause of his absence, replied very sententiously,

"Well, major, I did not think I was expected to stand out the *whole* of the day in the meridian sun."

This little bull made a great laugh against Cooke, more especially as he did not come from the sod; and I turned it into an epigram as follows:

"Wonder no more, ye sceptics bold,
At miracles perform'd of old,
Recorded in the sacred book:—
If Joshua, the son of Nun,
Could stop midway the blazing sun,
'Twas stopp'd as well to-day by Cooke."

This was handed round, and was held to be an improvement on the original; but one officious toady took the scrap of paper to the commanding officer, whose brains being no brighter than those of Cooke himself, it was a long time before he could make either head or tail of my poor epigram.

The colonel's commentary, when he did gain a competent knowledge of its inflammable nature, was, as usual, luminous and conclusive.

"Meester Blake," he said, "thocht himsel, and nae doot he was, an unco clever chiel; but he had mony things yet to larn, espeeially in skeeeton drill, where he was too often oot in his distance, and did not always come up successfully into line. With respec to this conundrum, he was an enemy to all sic-like; an' he was nae that sure but they were in direc' contradeection to the airticles o' war. Every one knew quite as weel as Meester Blake, clever as he thoct himsel, that a meridian was a sort of a roon-aboot three square, that the captain of an Eendiaman aye looked through when he wanted to see what o'clock it was by the sun, an' he didna ken why Captain Cooke might not mak' use of the same term. Then the word 'blazing sun' was vara unscreeptural; every one kenned that the sun was in the centre of heaven, and that the 'blazes' belonged to the ither place, which it was nae that canny to mention. With respect to one Joshua, the son of a nun, it was unco indiscreet of Meester Blake to eentro-duce any sic' a person to the notice of his brither officers—an' he was quite sure they kenned naething aboot ony sic a low-bred fallow; as for Captain Cooke stopping the blazing sun, he did not consider him sic a daft carl as to burn his fingers with ony sic experierment." Finally, the adjutant came to me laughing, with a request from the colonel, that "I would not write ony mair sic whigmaleeries, whilk only sarved to brew ill-bluid, and set folks together by the lug."

This literary delinquency did not, however, prevent McClish from conferring upon me soon after a post of great confidence. As light field-movements were to be the order of the day in the approaching campaign, Sir Nicholas Pipkin was directed to form a flank battalion, to consist of ten light companies from the different regiments under his command, both native and British. The command of this chosen band he conferred upon Colonel McClish, as confessedly the smartest officer in the whole force; and McClish having appointed me his adjutant, both he and I vied with each other in our efforts to bring our motley corps into the highest state of perfection. This we did by unwearied assiduity and attention in the course of five or six months, and though, at first, the men complained of the severity of drill, they ultimately took so much pride in the admirable condition to which we had brought them, that one spirit of emulation seemed to influence every individual of the battalion.

Nor was it allowed to evaporate. Orders were, at length, issued for an advance on the Mahratta territories; and, to my great comfort, the flank battalion being removed from the immediate command of Sir Nicholas Pipkin, was attached to the division of Brigadier-General Sir Lionel Smith. Under him it bore a distinguished part in his famous pursuit of Bajee Rao, the peishwah of the Mahrattas, when

that prince ran away from his capital Poonah; and also in the reduction of his numerous strongholds.

For these events I must refer the reader to other works. It will be sufficient here to say that the peishwah, after flying with his discomfited troops before Smith's victorious division, over many hundred miles of most difficult country, finally gave himself up to the British, abdicated his power in their favour, and retired with a pension of £80,000 per annum, to enjoy a life of ease and luxury, near Cawnpore, on the Ganges.

This celebrated chase was immediately after succeeded by another long hunt, in which the flank battalion bore a distinguished part, after Apa Sahib, the rajah of Berar. This prince's complicity in the conspiracy against the British having been laid bare, his capital, Nagpore, was taken possession of, after a determined resistance. A cantonment being laid out, and speedily erected in the vicinity, a large body of the Madras contingent was stationed there, under Sir Nicholas Pipkin, while we were detached in pursuit of the fugitive rajah.

After a long chase through a wild and savage country, in which Apa Sahib was hunted from one fastness to another, we at length penned him up in the hill fortress of Asseerghur, which we immediately besieged and took, after a long and desperate resistance. During the *mélée*, however, Apa Sahib escaped in the disguise of a sepoy, and fled to the country of the Sikhs, where he was indirectly sheltered for the remainder of his life by Runjeet Singh, the Lion of the Punjab.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE PINDARRIE CHASE.

THE flank battalion was now returning to Nagpore, after this ineffectual pursuit of Apa Sahib; and as we proceeded by easy marches, the men were much less fatigued than might have been expected from the great distance they had travelled, at so constant and so quick a pace. In fact, they were much less harassed than annoyed at losing their prey, for the ex-rajah was said to carry jewels of such immense value about his person, that they had all anticipated handsome prize-money; and their feelings against the foe, especially the Pindarries, who had materially aided his escape, were embittered in proportion to their disappointment, a circumstance which, in the result, produced the happiest effects.

I was riding with the colonel at the head of the battalion on the last day's march, listening with becoming attention as he suggested various improvements in the equipment of the men on these light expeditions, and the better organization of bheesties of bangywallas; when, within three miles of cantonments, we descried an officer, followed by an orderly dragoon, riding towards us at full speed.

He soon came up, puffing and blowing like a grampus, and proved

to be the brigade-major, a short, pursy little fellow, and a great gourmand.

"Colonel," he exclaimed, as soon as he recovered breath, "Sir Nicholas requests you will be good enough to hasten your march, for we have had a terrible to-do here in your absence."

"What's the matter noo, mon?" demanded the colonel. "Something or ither is aye sure to gae wrang when the flank battalion's awa'."

"Well, that is the fact," replied the brigade-major, who always knew when a little soft-sawder was acceptable. "Those rascally Pindarries, finding that you were absent on a wild-goo—hem! ahem! secret expedition, pounced upon us last night, and absolutely harried the whole cantonment, in as little time as you'd take to carve a plum-pudding."

"De'il ha' my body and saul, mon!" exclaimed the colonel. "Did the ramscallions do muckle mischief?"

"My bungalow is utterly gutted," replied the fat official, with a look of desolation quite comic. "Compound, godown, larder, piggery, and poultry-yard. There is not so much as a merrythought left of all my beautiful stock."

"Did I na tell ye, mon," said the colonel, "that your bungalow was too far awa frae the main-guard?"

"True, my dear colonel, true," sighed the poor sufferer. "I wish to heavens I had taken your wise counsel. But then, you know, I always require so much space for my stock—and I had such a splendid piggery. But the villains have gobbled up everything—geese, turkeys, hams, humps, and capons. I had the loveliest litter of sucking-pigs—"

"Weel, aweel," cried the colonel, impatiently, "what other mischief have they done?"

"Done!" replied the official, as if amazed at the stupendous amount and universal importance of his own particular losses; "they have gutted my wines, brandies, and brown stout. They haven't left me as much as would wet the whistle of a tom-tit."

"Weel, weel, mon," said the colonel snappishly.

"I had the divinest batch you ever saw of Lafitte," resumed the *bon-vivant*, "imported by myself from Bordeaux, direct; and the dearest little cask of 'particular'—clear crystalline, amber-coloured, as ever came from Madeira. In fact, my dear colonel, I had set apart these special favourites to welcome your return."

"Thank ye for naething, then," said the colonel, who well knew the value of a French compliment. "But deil ha' my saul, the chieils are a' ganging asleep. Strike up, bugles, close up thae rear sections; step oot, men, step oot in front."

We accordingly now began to step out in earnest, and the brigade-major, meanwhile, resumed his catalogue of disasters.

"Then, there's the poor dear general," he exclaimed, with a look of official commiseration. "They say his misfortunes have driven the gout into his stomach."

"What do you say?" I now for the first time demanded. "What about the general's misfortunes?"

"His poor dear family, Blake, all destroyed," was the reply.

"Great heaven!" I exclaimed. "Is it possible?"

"Poor Shigram Po!" continued the brigade-major.

"D—n Shigram Po!" I exclaimed, in a pet.

"With all my heart!" responded the complaisant official; "but let me tell you, Blake, that he was one of the best, if not the very best, cook in the whole Madras army; I don't care who the other—"

"But Lady Pipkin?" I said, impetuously. "What of Lady Pipkin?"

"Poor dear Lady Pipkin!" he replied. "Let me see! Oh! she's either burnt to death, speared through the body, or carried off by the Pindarries. I came out in such a hurry, that I couldn't ascertain which."

The agony I was thrown into by the egotistical prosing of this sensual hog was excruciating. I demanded permission to ride forward, to ascertain the worst; but this the colonel himself did. Meanwhile, we hurried on at such a pace, that we were soon drawn up on the parade; having proofs enough around us, in the still blazing bungalows and smoking ruins, of the desolating course of the ruthless Pindarries.

All this mischief had been done in two or three hours, by a *lubhur* of ten thousand, under two active and notorious chiefs, Sevajee and Secunder Jah; who, sweeping down suddenly, like a whirlwind, upon the too-scattered cantonment, at an hour when all were buried in profound repose, effected their villanous purpose before a body of troops could be got together to oppose them. Having carried off everything worth taking, and wantonly destroyed the rest, they scoured and scampered off, in their usual manner, as rapidly as they came, no one knowing whither, or in what direction.

As speedily as possible, however, Major Lumsden had started in chase of them with three squadrons of Light Dragoons, and galloper-guns, while Captain King pursued them by another road, with two batteries of flying artillery.

While listening to these details, the colonel galloped up, and addressed the line in a short but pithy speech, as follows:—

"Sodgers!—The geeneral wants twa hunred volunteers, to follow thae rantipole Pindarries, wha hae carried awa his wife and bairn. Ilka mon wha joins willingly and *nolens volens* in the pursuit, is to receive ten rupees frae the geeneral's ain pouch, and he wha rescues the leddy and her puir wee bairn, a thoosand."

I spurred forward at the first words the colonel uttered, and dropping the point of my sword, claimed the honour of being the first volunteer on the occasion.

"Nay, but Meester Blake," said the colonel, "I canna spare ye frae the orderly-room; I shall hae sic a muckle sight o' leeterary correspondence, mon, aboot this infarnal clanjamfry."

"Colonel," I replied, firmly; "I claim this honour as a right; being the senior subaltern of my regiment, and, as such, entitled to lead the first forlorn hope."

"Weel, aweel!" cried the colonel, somewhat puzzled, "I dinna dispute the reet, mon; but what the de'il am I to do for a *mani-wonsis*?"

"I'll find you one," I replied; "there's Jenkins, the junior subaltern of my company, who writes a much better hand than I do myself; and who," I added, *sotto voce*, "will be very much obliged to me for leaving him at home."

"Weel, weel," said the colonel, whose test of scholarship consisted in superior caligraphy; "we'll see aboot it, mon; but recollect, sir, that I shall require the pen of a reedy writer, as Shakspeare says."

My own company instantly volunteered to a man, as did several others, both native and European; and eventually the whole regiment came forward; but the colonel would give me only one hundred Europeans, and a hundred sepoys, with a dozen light cavalry as scouts. I was very well content with this arrangement; for the native soldiers of the flank battalion were all brave fellows, very much attached to their adjutant, and quite as capable of bearing fatigue and privation as the Europeans themselves.

"And noo, Blake," said the colonel, taking me aside, "I shall na send ony o' the captains wi ye, mon, that ye may ha' it a' ye're own way, soleass cum soleass, as the French say."

I expressed myself, and really felt, grateful to McClish, for this act of kindness; and, shaking hands, he wished me a *suspicious* and triumphant journey.

Preparations were now made for a speedy start; an excellent dinner was prepared for the men, which they ate on the parade (under tents pitched for those who had been unhoused); with a double allowance of rum for the Europeans, and vegetable curries in abundance for the natives. Fresh flints, and sixty rounds of ammunition, were served out to each man; strong active camels were furnished by the commissariat, to accompany us, laden with rice, dol, pickled pork, biscuit, rum, coffee, sugar, &c., and a sufficient number of bheesties with mussuks, or water-bags. These, with the officers' private servants and bangywallas, secured us pretty well against all apprehension of hunger and thirst on the expedition through a country which we could only expect to find in a state of desolation; while the warmth and dryness of the weather enabled us to dispense altogether with tents and camp-equipage.

In three or four hours' time we were ready to start on this fresh expedition, after having just accomplished one of several hundred miles, in pursuit of Apa Sahib. The men were in the highest possible spirits, while the whole cantonment turned out to witness our departure, and bid us God speed.

Fortunately, for some time past I had very much devoted my attention to the geography and topography of the country between Nagpore and the Nerbudda. I had furnished myself with, and collated, the best published maps; and had even drawn up some myself, with the assistance of a friend in the engineers, founded partly on actual survey and partly on information collected from *hircarrahs*, *tappall* men, *brinjaries*, and other intelligent natives. I was thus well prepared for the command I had undertaken; and, as I knew there would be little use in following with infantry the precise track of the Pindarries, whose hardy Mahratta horses travelled at the rate of forty miles a day on these expeditions; I determined

to strike at once across the country, for the principal fords of the Nerbudda, on which the different *lubburs* would be converging, to cross that formidable stream before the approaching rains should render it impracticable.

Keeping, therefore, the lofty Droog of Gawilghur to the left, as an excellent landmark, I directed my route, by compass, for Hindia, on the right bank of the Nerbudda, where I knew that the principal ford was situated; scouting well to the right, myself and my dragoons, in the hope of hearing something of the foe.

Nor was it long before we met with sad vestiges of their ruthless course, in the flying inhabitants of the intervening country; some driving their cattle before them, laden with their simple implements of husbandry, and the few household utensils or other valuables they had been able to save from the spoiler. Every individual man, woman, and child, above six years old, carried a load of grain proportioned to their strength; the mothers, in addition, bearing their infants astride on their hips, in the peculiar manner of the Hindoo female.

But these lucky fugitives were on the outskirts of the tract of country through which the gang of fiends had swept, like the deadly simoom, spreading ruin and desolation in their fearful course. As we drew nearer to the focus of their operations, then, indeed, our hearts were rent with pity and horror. Ruined villages, shattered walls, and smoking homesteads, told too vividly the tragic tale; while, if anything could increase the rage that filled our breasts, it was the horrid sight of dead and dying bodies, men, women and children; the helpless, inoffensive inhabitants of this once peaceful region, now mingled in one common scene of butchery. Some had their noses and ears cut off by the ruthless monsters, in their horrid impatience to possess themselves of ear-rings and nose-rings: young women with their hands and feet mercilessly chopped off by the battle-axe of the Pindarrie, eager to clutch the silver bracelet and anklet of the hapless wearer. Old men groaning in agony, to the soles of whose feet red-hot irons had been applied to enforce a disclosure of concealed treasure; others, whose clothes had been saturated with oil, and ignited; and many whose heads were tied up in bags filled with hot ashes, and thus frightfully suffocated. Though a few years previously, I had looked with horror on the cruelties committed by the French in Spain and Portugal, they were infinitely surpassed by those which marked the course of the fiend-like Pindarries.

But I shall no longer pain the reader's breast by my feeble relation of horrors which no language can adequately describe. The savage monsters pursued their merciless career, unchecked by any feeling of human pity, till the hour of retribution came, as come it did; for, even in this unaccountable world, the just vengeance of the Deity is often evinced in a manner not to be mistaken.

We had now been three days upon our march; in which time we had passed over eighty miles of country, without encountering the enemy. We generally marched at the rate of thirty miles in the four-and-twenty hours; the greater portion of the distance being got over in the night, the most favourable time for expeditions of this nature, especially at this season of the year, when the roads

were good, the grass-jungles burnt up; and few or no tigers lurking near the highways. During the excessive heat of the day, when the ground was hot enough to scorch the feet, we lay by in the jungle, of which there was no scarcity; and that was the time for cooking, eating, sleeping, washing, and otherwise refreshing ourselves for the toils of the night.

Our route lay through a country of diversified character. Sometimes we stumbled on through deep wooded glens and ravines into whose dark recesses the silver radiance of the moon could seldom penetrate. Sometimes the country was rich in the extreme; studded with villages, and covered with luxuriant fields of wheat, hemp, grain, sugar-cane, &c., and at others, nature seemed to riot in unbounded luxuriance; lofty trees spreading on all sides their gigantic arms, while the road was fringed with thorny and prickly shrubs of every size and shape, and canes soaring to the height of sixty feet and upwards. Nothing interrupted our progress or disturbed us on the way, except occasionally the low, deep growl of a tiger, as he skulked into the woods, the ferocious grunt of a wild hog, whose lair we had beat up, or the mournful cry of a pack of jackals, which bore a character of appalling and desolate melancholy.

At length we began to get tidings of the Pindarries, and everything now seemed to indicate our mutual approximation; for it was evident that, pursuing, as it were, the chord of the semi-circle they were describing, we had intercepted their retreat, and actually stood between them and the ford by which they calculated on passing the river.

On the morning of the fourth day, I was scouting, as usual, at some distance from the line of march, when I heard female shrieks on the other side of a belt of jungle that lay a little distance in my front.

Sounds of this description had always met with a ready response in my breast; but now that my thoughts were pre-occupied with Julia, and the horrible captivity into which she was plunged, my zeal in the cause of the oppressed was increased tenfold. Giving the reins to my Arab, the best of two which I rode alternately on these excursions, he bounded forward, and speedily cleared the bosky obstacle that lay before us.

Beyond this was a tract of cleared level ground, over which a Pindarrie, armed with a long spear, was cantering; dragging after him, in spite of prayers and entreaties, an unhappy woman, round whose neck he had fastened a coil of rope, such as the scoundrels always carry at their saddle-bow for exploits of this nature.

Enraged at the fellow's brutality, for the hapless creature would sometimes fall to the earth, and thus be dragged for many yards along the rugged surface of the ground, my first impulse was to shoot him with my rifle; but, reflecting that if I could take him alive, he might serve as a guide to the encampment of the lubhur, I reslung the trusty weapon, drew my sabre, and, dashing forward with a loud shout, challenged the villain to the combat.

He no sooner saw me, than he cast off his victim; and, digging the stirrup-iron, which contains the spur, into the sides of his horse,

he galloped off with all the speed of the animal, in the opposite direction.

But the poltroon had now a high-blood Arab, and an Irish fox-hunter to contend with ; and the chase was speedily determined. I was coming up with him, hand over hand, when, turning round in his saddle, with ferocious threats and villanous language, he levelled one of his pistols at me, with a very deliberate aim ; but the weapons of the Pindarries are never of a trustworthy character, and it missed fire. He then discharged the other with better effect, the ball passing through my cap, but fortunately without touching my head. At last, finding that he had only one more chance for his life, he very adroitly wheeled his horse round as I approached ; and, poising his spear, rushed at me with the hope of pinning me to the earth.

Another moment, and my doom was sealed. But with a presence of mind which has fortunately never failed me, by a dexterous application of spur and snaffle, my gallant steed made a side-spring, which cleared me of the formidable weapon ; while, with a back-stroke of my sabre, I cut the bamboo shaft in two, and the Pindarrie lay at my mercy.

Finding it all over with him, he became as humble now, as before he had been bold and insolent. He threw himself off his horse, fell upon his knees, and begged for his life in the most abject terms. I untwisted the fellow's turban, which was of enormous length, thereby scattering abroad sundry nose-rings, ear-rings, and other poor maid's jewels, of which it was the repository ; and, tying one end of it round his neck, I thus led him, more mercifully than he had done his poor captive, to where he beheld, to his amazement, the band of avengers whom he imagined safe in the cantonment of Nagpore.

Having halted the detachment, I summoned my brother officers to council ; and we had no difficulty in obtaining all necessary information from the now crest-fallen Pindarrie.

The lubhur was to halt that night at a large village, called Chilumbaucum, about five miles to our right ; hoping to cross the Nerbudda the following day, unscathed, and with all their ill-gotten treasures. They were certain, he said, after having plundered the village, to spend the night in feasting and carousing ; and as it is one of the well-known peculiarities of this race of monsters, never to set guards or post sentries over their bivouacs, trusting entirely, it seems, to the rapidity of their movements and the fleetness of their horses, I entertained no doubt whatever of our ultimate success. The odds, it is true, in point of numbers, were greatly against us ; but nothing, I felt assured, could withstand the discipline, courage, and physical prowess of British troops.

Having given the men a two hours' rest, during which they cooked and ate a hearty supper, we set off in the highest confidence and spirits, under the guidance of our Pindarrie, whom I placed between two officers, with directions to shoot him instantly, if he evinced any treachery, or attempted to escape.

It was now past nine o'clock : the night, luckily, was dark as pitch, not a star even to be seen in the firmament ; while a profound silence reigned over the wide expanse of woodland scenery through which

our route lay; all the wretched inhabitants who were not dead or dying having fled from the horrid vicinity of the ravagers as far as their trembling limbs would carry them. All this was highly favourable to our undiscovered advance; but, as our progress was necessarily slow and cautious, it was midnight ere we approached the village, which was surrounded, within a little distance, by a screen of thick jungle that effectually concealed our movements.

Everything in the village, which was large enough to accommodate the entire *labhur*, with the exception of their elephants and cattle, which were picketed outside, was settling into the most profound repose; and a general hush was absorbing the concatenation of noises which had but recently sprung from the shouts of the drunkards, the neighing of horses, the trumpeting of elephants, the growling of camels, the jingling of bells, and the monotonous tapping and thumping of tom-toms. Here and there a riotous party were prolonging their carouse; till, one after another, they insensibly dropped off into that deep sleep upon the bare earth from which so many of them were never more to awaken. By the lurid glare of the burning houses, which they had first plundered and then wantonly set fire to, and by the flames of the consuming furniture, piled up in the streets to light them in their godless revels, we could distinguish all their proceedings as plainly as at noon-day, mark the points of attack where our onset was most likely to be effectual, and make our dispositions accordingly.

Right in front of the station I had taken up to reconnoitre, sat a circle of the principal chiefs and officers, with a large fire burning in the midst. Some of these were clad in showy mail or plate armour, with swords, shields, and matchlocks, while others were armed with spears, creeses, and round lackered shields, their bodies being defended by a leathern cuirass or a quilted sword-proof jacket; all were engaged in animated discussion, which appeared to have reference to the morrow's proceedings and the amount and division of the spoil.

As I gazed on this paraphernalia, gorgeous but trumpery, when opposed to the musket-ball and the British bayonet, a group of Pindarries, armed with matchlocks, targets, spears, and swords, arrived, hurrying along with them into the circle a venerable Brahmin, who loudly begged and prayed for mercy; but he was now in the clutches of those who knew not the meaning of the term. Being ordered to discover where he had concealed his treasure, he called Heaven to witness, in the most pathetic language, that he had not a rupee in all the world: a shout of scorn followed this disclaimer, and the tormentors were ordered to do their duty.

These horrid wretches, who seemed to delight in their infernal task, first wound a quantity of old rags, saturated with oil, round his fingers, and set them on fire; while, as the poor wretch felt his flesh burn and consume under the application, and danced about in excruciating agony, he became the subject of brutal mirth and laughter to these incarnate fiends. The first effort of the executioners not having produced the desired effect, they next produced a horse's nose-bag; filled it nearly with hot ashes from the fire, tied

it over the head of their victim, and thumped him violently on the back, till he was forced to inhale a portion of its contents. No human powers or patience could long endure this frightful mode of suffocation; the wretched victim rolled in convulsions upon the ground, till one chief, more merciful than the rest, drove a spear through his body, and put a period to his torments.

Gladly would I, at that moment, have given the signal for attack; but I should thereby have defeated my principal object, and only half accomplished the duty I had imposed upon myself. I therefore restrained my impatience until the deep silence of the Pindarrie camp indicated that all were sunk in profound repose.

The village principally consisted of one main street, whose entire length and breadth were crowded with the marauders, lying about in all directions, and in different stages of drunkenness; their horses, as I before observed, being picketed outside, together with numerous elephants, camels, bullocks, and bullock-bandies, all heavily laden with the varied spoils of the campaign. From the main street branched off several lateral passages, or lanes, leading to pathways through the jungle; and at the outlets of these I stationed small parties, with orders to shoot down all who attempted to escape in those directions. The remainder of my force I divided into two bodies; the strongest of which was to commence the attack at one end of the main street, while the rest were to line the road at the other, by which alone the fugitives could hope to fly.

In short, everything succeeded to our wish. About two o'clock in the morning, when some of the Pindarries began to stir themselves and prepare for the road, a rocket soared aloft from a little eminence on which I stood; and, ere its hissing had subsided, a volley from the attacking party rang the knell of death to the monsters who had so long spread, with impunity, every description of horror which the mind can conceive, over many hundred miles of territory, and over thousands upon thousands of helpless and inoffensive beings.

Scarcely had the echo of the first volley ceased, when another and another succeeded, each covering the ground with killed and wounded; while the survivors, now effectually roused from their slumbers, ran wildly about in terror and dismay, uttering frightful yells of horror and amazement. But the villains met in all directions the stroke of fate, and perished amidst a continuous peal of musketry, which fell upon them they knew not whence; as if the justly-excited anger of the Deity had recalled to life their innumerable victims, and filled their avenging hands with fire from heaven.

Day broke in the midst of the slaughter; when the bravest and most desperate of the marauders endeavoured to make head against their now visible enemy. But though they advanced in heavy masses, with sword, and spear, and matchlock, they were met everywhere with the close sustained fire of sections and subdivisions. The British bayonet finally terminated the conflict, and the lubhur of ten thousand robbers and murderers was scattered to the four winds of heaven in irretrievable defeat; their horses, elephants, camels, and bullocks remaining in the hands of the victors, with all the accumulated plunder of every district of the Deccan.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE KUBBEER-BUR.

OF the remnant of this murderous band, few of whom escaped unhurt from the balls and bayonets of my gallant Light Bobs, two only were now visible; but these were mounted upon fleet and powerful horses, of the celebrated breed from the banks of the Beemah, and the rapidity of their flight from the scene of action, evinced their speed and freshness. From their dress and accoutrements, these fugitives were evidently chiefs of eminence, and apparently brave fellows; for, though unable to struggle any longer against an overpowering foe, they waved their hands in scorn and defiance, and called upon us, with every abusive epithet which their language so abundantly supplies, to follow if we dared.

Jaded as my trusty Arabs were, after the exertions of the previous day and night, I would have willingly allowed these two fellows to escape, and even have stomached their insolent bravado; but I was driven almost to madness by seeing that one of them bore a female on the pommel of his saddle, and the other held a child in his arms.

Satisfied in my own mind, that these could be no other than the lady and infant heir of the general, the cherished objects of our search, I dashed the rowels into the panting sides of my generous steed, who sprang forward as if imbued with my own feelings, and bore me in headlong chase after the foe, determined to die rather than suffer my still-adored Julia to continue at the mercy of such ruthless villains.

Without waiting to see if I was followed by any of my party, on I went in full career, over hill and dale, through dell and dingle; under the branches of lofty trees, that cast a deep shadow on the ground, and anon exposed to the fervid rays of the sun, where the barren heath and the rocky desert lay in our path. Still, however, I gained not upon the chase; and it vexed me sorely to perceive that, although my Arab was at the full stretch of his somewhat exhausted powers, the Pindarries were evidently restraining the fleetness of their noble steeds, husbanding, as it were, their strength and activity for a more deadly push, while, ever and anon, they would salute me with a volley of oaths and imprecations, exclaiming "Feringhee Banchoot! Teereemaukachoot!" and other equally brutal and offensive terms.

And yet they must have felt that their lives were in my hands; for, with my trusty rifle, I had frequent opportunities of bringing them down. But I was withheld by the apprehension of injuring those dear beings whose lives I would gladly save at the risk of my own. I shouted, however, the name of Julia, till my bosom ached with the effort, to let her know that help was nigh; and her cries in return were a sufficient proof that she heard and understood my object. Nay, I once thought I could catch upon the gale the name of Blake, in imploring accents; but this must have been fancy, for, though

conscious of the pursuit, she could not possibly be aware that the pursuer was one who had once been, and perhaps still was, so dear to her heart.

On, on we went in full career; the powers of horse and men being multiplied, as it were, by the maddening excitement of the chase: bounding over steep and dangerous nullahs, and dashing through foaming torrents, which now frequently obstructed our way, indicating our vicinity to some great stream of which they were the tributaries. Once I thought myself sure of my prey; for the horse on which poor Julia rode made an awful stumble in crossing one of these streams, and my heart leaped to my mouth at the apprehension of her danger. But the noble beast recovered himself, and, as if ashamed of the slip he had made, redoubled his efforts, shaking his head and champing the bit, as if determined to pluck the reins out of his rider's hands.

On, on we went, reckless of dangers and heedless of obstructions; the fugitives apparently anxious to keep only a certain distance, and no more, between them and their pursuer, while I made every effort, but in vain, to diminish that distance. When we first started in this unequal chase, and for some time after, the shouts and cries of battle still rang in our ears; and an occasional volley, or a few dropping shots, seemed to indicate that the work of death was not yet terminated. But all these sounds had now ceased; and nothing was to be heard but the clattering of the horses' feet on the rocky soil, or the braying of a deer, or the crowing of the jungle-cock in the distance. My horse was one sheet of foam, and the perspiration rolled down my own face in streams, as we laboured through the deep soil of some cotton-grounds, which sorely tried the blood and bottom of my Arab; for his strength had long been decaying, while the steeds of the enemy still seemed to retain their pristine freshness and vigour.

At length, we came to a long, sloping eminence of broken, rocky ground; and here it was that the fugitives seemed determined to exhibit their superior powers: for, with a shout of defiance, and a volley of curses, they urged their horses to a final effort, and the gallant steeds bounded upwards as if they carried a feather-weight. Enraged at the prospect of being distanced, which now seemed inevitable; excited almost to frenzy by seeing Julia wave her scarf as they gained the top, and stood out in bold relief against the sky, I encouraged my Arab with voice and hand; and nobly the generous animal responded to the call, for in a few elastic bounds we also gained the summit of the ridge.

Oh! what a glorious prospect opened to my astonished gaze! The mighty Nerbudda winding its majestic course through a boundless expanse of woodland scenery of unequalled magnificence; its turbid waters, swollen by the rains which had just set in to the eastward, overflowing its sedgy banks; while the awe-inspiring solitude and silence that reigned on every side were unbroken; and nothing human was in sight to jar with the immeasurable grandeur of nature in repose, but the two Pindaries, now urging their horses with all their might directly towards the wild-rolling current.

Upbraiding myself for the involuntary transport which had caused

a momentary delay, I again took up the chase, satisfied that now, at last, I must soon have the enemy at bay; for any attempt to cross the boiling flood before us on horseback, encumbered as they were, must have been fatal to all. I tightened my reins, grasped my rifle more firmly, set my teeth for a final effort; and, recommending my soul to a just and merciful Providence, I dashed forward, utterly regardless of what became of its earthly incumbrance, in the stern and sacred path of duty.

A screen of tall sedges that grew upon the banks of the river had now hidden the enemy from my view: but, having marked the spot at which they had disappeared, I directed my course thither; when, to my astonishment, as I drew nigh, the two horses came galloping out without riders, caracoling, and flinging their hind legs in the air; while their bridle-reins, being fastened to the pommels of the saddles, showed that their escape was not accidental, but the customary trick of the Pindarries, when hard beset. My two gentlemen had, doubtless, sought concealment in some cavern or hollow in the river's brink; and their steeds were thus let loose, to find their way, as best they could, to one or other of their numerous haunts in this wild and savage district.

Determined, however, to find the enemy, or perish in the attempt, I plunged into the midst of this bed of reeds, shouting "Julia! Julia!" to the utmost compass of my voice; but nothing responded to my call. Raging with excitement, onward I pushed my noble steed, following the narrow track which led through this dense and lofty bed of reeds, till I came, at length, to the water-side; when, amidst the angry current, about two hundred yards distant, I beheld the two Pindarries, skilfully and energetically rowing one of those coracles, or circular boats made of wicker-work, and covered with untanned hides, so common on the rivers of India.

Julia and her infant were nowhere to be seen. They were probably, I thought at the bottom of the coracle; but the Pindarries were more than half exposed to view, as they urged the boat, in its circular motion, through the mass of waters, towards an island in the middle of the stream, entirely overgrown with what appeared to me a tope of magnificent trees, whose foliage extended down, like a vast umbrella, even into the very waters of the Nerbudda.

A shout of triumph, and another round of insulting epithets, rang from the two Pindarries—but it was the last they uttered in concert; for, bringing the butt of my trusty rifle to my shoulder, I took a steady aim, and one of the two fell to rise no more. Unluckily, my other barrel had been discharged in the action, or his companion would have shared his fate; but, before I had time to reload and fire again, the surviving Pindarrie had whirled his light bark beyond the range on which I could certainly calculate, and he got off scot free.

My only hope now, was to swim my horse across the foaming flood, to the island; an attempt perilous enough in itself, exclusive of the reception I might expect from the Pindarrie on the other side. But courage mounteth with occasion: I wet my own lips with my brandy flask, poured the remainder down the throat of my horse, who

neighed loudly, as if invigorated by the draught; then, springing again upon his back, I plunged into the world of waters.

And a desperate struggle we had in that boundless waste, as it then appeared to me, of "rolling and foaming billows." The monsoon had just set in, and with more than ordinary violence; the rains on the mountain range in the upper part of the valley of the Nerbudda, had, therefore, swelled the thousand tributaries of that noble stream, which was now every moment increasing in width and volume, inundating the lower grounds, and isolating the more lofty portions of its banks, whose rocky and wooded summits now appeared like so many islands in the vast expanse.

The current was powerful; but I made my Arab breast its impetuosity, that we might not be carried down lower than the coracle; and, in this respect, we had the advantage of the Pindarrie, who, being reduced to his one oar, was driven bodily to leeward. Our progress was thus vexatiously slow; but I evidently gained upon the chase—so much, indeed, that the villain once or twice handled his matchlock, as if determined to give me its contents. Apparently, however, not thinking the opportunity a good one, he laid it by again, and resumed the oar. This reminded me that I had discharged both my barrels; and I reloaded them as speedily as I could under the circumstances, being half immersed in water, and requiring all my undivided efforts to keep my horse up against the rapidity of the current.

We were now nearing the island, whose vast screen of foliage, though it looked beautiful and refreshing to the eye, long dazzled with the blaze of Oriental noon, was in other respects discouraging, from the facilities for escape it must necessarily afford the fugitive. The latter had got into a current of the river, with whose peculiarities he seemed perfectly well acquainted, which carried him with immense velocity towards the shore; with very little further exertion on his part, he speedily touched the bank, jumped out, and moored his frail bark to the stem of a tree whose branches overarched him, as they bent downwards and dipped their foliage in the stream.

Having thus secured his vessel, the Pindarrie lost no time in seizing upon his prey. Getting into the coracle again, he lifted the insensible Julia upon his shoulder, trussed the poor infant under his arm, and, even thus encumbered, sprang nimbly upon the shore, and disappeared in the windings of the forest.

Maddened at the idea of his thus escaping with his precious spoil, I urged my horse forward to redoubled exertion; while, as he snorted and pawed the flood, he seemed anxious to give me one last proof of unconquerable spirit and fidelity. But, alas for my gallant Arab! it was his last; for, as he raised his head aloft, in a sudden and convulsive effort to reach the shore, a ball from the matchlock of the concealed Pindarrie, which was well aimed for my body, struck him in a vital part behind the ear, and with a gasp and a plunge, he sank into the boiling flood, carrying me down with him, while the Pindarrie's shout of triumph rang bitterly in my ear.

Fortunately, I had presence of mind, in that critical moment of

my fate, to stretch my arm out at full length, so as to keep my rifle above the water; then slipping my feet out of the stirrups, I struck out with my left arm, and speedily rose to the surface.

The current was carrying me rapidly past the spot where the Pindarrie had disappeared; but being a powerful swimmer, I soon reached the shore: and never did a poor drowning wretch bless Providence so heartily for escape—the preservation of my own life weighing but little in the scale, when compared with the exulting hope of still rescuing by beloved Julia from the fangs of this atrocious fiend.

I now examined the priming of my rifle, and was delighted to find it perfectly dry: I had thus a double death in my hand; and, with renewed vigour from my involuntary bath, I set forward with as much celerity as the obstacles I encountered permitted.

But, much as I had been struck with the dense magnitude of the foliage in which this solitary island was embowered, I was still more amazed to discover, on landing, that it did not spring from many distinct and separate trees, but from one gigantic banyan, whose enormous branches, spreading out horizontally, sent their shoots down to the earth. There taking root, they grew to almost equal size with the parent stem, and propagated in their turn fresh stems, shoots, and branches, in singular and endless variety.

I had often read in the “Wonders of India,” of the Kubbeer-bur, or gigantic banyan-tree, which covered a whole island in the Nerbudda, and was capable of giving shelter to ten thousand men; this, it seems, was the identical spot in which I now so unexpectedly found myself.

In silent awe at the marvellous works of creation, I wandered amidst the mazy labyrinth, which lay before me in fantastic vistas; at times resembling the rude outlines of natural grottos, and at others, the lofty and pillared aisles of a gothic cathedral; while a stray sunbeam, breaking through the foliage, produced that dim, religious light which an oriel window might admit; and the solemn and impressive silence that prevailed might lead one to anticipate the pealing of an organ, to speak peace and comfort to the suffering and world-weary, and lift the enraptured soul to heaven.

But it was not by the divine pealing of an organ that the silence of the banyan-tree was at length interrupted; but by a long and wailing cry, that seemed to issue from a breaking heart; followed by a succession of agonizing shrieks, that too clearly spoke the deadly extremity of the sufferer.

Maddened at the sound, I sprang forward with a velocity that nothing could retard; and ere long I beheld a scene which for a moment sent the life-blood retreating to my heart. Julia was kneeling in an imploring attitude at the feet of the Pindarrie, who held her infant, naked, and with its head downwards, in his left outstretched arm; while with his right he brandished his tulwar, ready to strike the fatal blow upon the screaming innocent, if the decision of its hapless mother was adverse to the demands of the ruthless monster who was now the uncontrolled master of her destiny.

There was not an instant to be lost. The time required for clear-

ing the space between us would have been fatal, even if my presence was not sufficient of itself to hasten the catastrophe. Summoning, therefore, that coolness in extremity which had never failed me, I brought my rifle to a level, so as to avoid the dear objects of my solicitude; and, in another instant, a ball went crashing through the skull of the ruffian, who fell a lifeless mass upon the sod; while Julia, catching her infant, with a cry of joy and wonder, covered its little body with fond and eager kisses.

I approached slowly, to give the poor mother time to vent her maternal emotions; but when she saw who it really was that had saved her from a more dreadful fate than death itself, the poor soul gave way to the ungovernable impulse of feeling and gratitude, and, rushing into my arms, shared her burning kisses between me and her rescued child. At length, recollecting herself, she withdrew from my embrace with all the dignity of an English matron; and sinking on her knees, with eyes upturned and streaming with tears, she offered up her mute thanksgiving to that Power which alone could have saved her in so deadly an extremity.

With a feeling of respect commensurate with the utter helplessness of my *protégée*, and her entire dependence, now, upon my honour, I waited till Julia had finished her prayer; and then, with a cheerful voice, congratulated her on her escape.

"And it is to you, Blake," she replied, "my more than friend,—my dear, dear brother! that I am indebted for this unutterable blessing. Ah! little did I think, during these few days' terrible captivity, which appeared to me as so many ages,—when incessantly hurried from one place to another by my ruthless masters, that they fled in terror before the man whom of all others I could least expect to take any interest in my fate. Little did I think—but, good Heavens! what is the meaning of this? My feet are in the water, though but a moment since I stood upon dry ground! 'Tis like enchantment!"

"I have observed it for some time past, my dear Julia," I replied, with affected unconcern: "the river is rising fast beyond its ordinary level; and the inundation is so vast that I shall not be surprised if the whole island is speedily submerged."

"Gracious Powers!" she exclaimed; "what shall we do then? Must we perish after all?"

"Do not be alarmed, dearest," I replied; "we are perfectly safe here, so long as this noble tree shall bid defiance to the flood, as it has done for ages. Here we are at the original trunk which has propagated so many stanch supporters that it is impregnable to such accidents as this; though the decay of age, as you perceive, has hollowed it into various cavities. In one of these we will take shelter, and in perfect safety from the rising tide, wait patiently till our friends come in search of us."

I now assisted Julia to ascend the rough trunk of the banyan-tree, whose gnarled and time-fractured exterior offered every facility for that purpose. Before many minutes had elapsed, we were all securely seated in one of its many hollows, at a spot where the interlacing of two or three enormous branches afforded us a firm

and tolerably level footing, far above the encroaching element; whose very perceptible progress, however, Julia continued to gaze on with anxiety and terror.

The day was now waning fast, and the short twilight of the tropics must speedily give way to utter darkness. The necessity, therefore, of passing the night in this strange position, imparted much uneasiness to us both; and though I affected to treat the matter lightly, yet I felt all the gravity of the circumstance, in its various bearings upon Julia and myself.

The consciousness that the woman I had so long adored was now so completely secluded with me from all the world, while her head rested on my shoulder, and her weary eyelids were closing in welcome sleep, imparted a degree of rapture to my breast to which it had been long a stranger; but this was speedily chastened by the thought that she was now the wife of another, and sacred in my eyes by every principle of religion, every tie of honour, and every impulse of manly feeling. What Julia's thoughts may have been on the occasion it would be equally vain and impertinent to inquire; but that her dreams were happy I felt assured, by the placid smile upon her lovely features, betrayed by a straggling moonbeam as she lay asleep and all unconscious in my protecting arms.

Amongst the minor considerations which served to render our situation exceedingly irksome, we had neither of us tasted food for the whole day; and I confess, to my shame, that visions of roast-beef too often mingled with my purest thoughts and most heroic resolutions: nor do I think that Sancho in Barrataria, or Athelstan the Unready in the burial vault of the monks of St. Edmund's, ever felt more truly desirous of a piece of the chine or a cut from the surloin. Julia bore the privation with greater equanimity, satisfied that she could minister to the wants of her infant by that maternal fount supplied by all bountiful nature; and, as she turned aside to fulfil this first of all human duties and delights, I mentally vowed that no act on my part should ever sully the purity of mind she then enjoyed.

Thus wore away this strange eventful night, during which I never once closed my eyes in sleep, but continued looking dreamily into the palpable obscure; which was, however, enlivened by the flitting of myriads of fire-flies, whose tiny sparkles resembled a whole firmament of infinitesimal stars in rapid and eccentric motion. I deemed my duty but half-performed, if I kept not incessant watch and ward over my helpless and confiding *protégés*; though, perhaps, the reader will feel disposed to give me but little praise for this, when I honestly tell him that I was regularly victimized by millions upon millions of mosquitoes; who seemed amazingly to enjoy the novel treat of a European supper in the dense foliage of a banyan-tree.

Towards morning Julia awoke; and objects becoming visible, she was alarmed at the great height attained by the flood, though we still were some feet above its surface. After preparing her and her baby against the explosion, I now fired off both my barrels in succession, in the hope of attracting any of my party that might be within hearing; but I had scarcely done so when myriads of blue

pigeons and vampire-bats, or flying foxes, as they are more generally termed, came flapping and fluttering around us in terror and confusion; while thousands of monkeys hopped about from branch to branch, chattering and making horrible faces at us, for thus disturbing the peace of their hereditary dominions.

I repeated this experiment two or three times; and at length had the gratification of hearing several shots in return, while prolonged shouts came faintly over the waste of waters.

Relief was now evidently nigh, and hope kept our spirits from sinking; but it was late in the day before our brave fellows could find a boat capable of releasing us from our island prison. The delight with which we could at length distinguish the sound of paddles will be readily conceived; and I confess that I never heard my own name uttered with such perfect satisfaction, as by those well-known voices which now incessantly called out: "Bhote burra salaam, Blake Sahib!" and "Percy Blake! yoix, yoix, tally-ho!"

I repeatedly shouted in turn, which directed our deliverers to our place of refuge; and before long, a boat approached, amidst the half-submerged alleys and arcades of the mighty Kubbeer-bur; it was impelled with rude paddles by some of my European and Sepoy Light Bobs, while a brother officer sat in the stern-sheets, steering as he best might with a long, unwieldy plank.

We embarked right merrily under the hearty congratulations of our friends, who had been sadly alarmed by my sudden disappearance; and, after a tedious row of an hour, owing to the extreme width and violence of the river, we at length reached the shore. Here we found a palankin waiting for Julia, and a horse for me; and in another half-hour we reached the bivouac of the party, which was established at some distance from the village, now the undisputed spoil of the vulture and the jackal. With a good substantial fowl curry, and a bottle of Maderia, Julia and I made up for our long previous fast; and we prolonged the pleasure of the night in the midst of our rejoicing friends.

At two o'clock the following morning, we marched from our bivouac, with a long train of heavily-laden elephants, camels, bullocks, and innumerable horses, the valuable fruit of our exploit; and in four days arrived at Nagpore, where we had the gratification to learn that we had destroyed and dispersed for ever the last of the Pindarrie bands; the leaders of which, Secunder Jah, the Affghan, and the Mahratta Sevajee, had both fallen by my rifle.

CHAPTER LX.

THE MYSTERIOUS SUMMONS.

WE were received with every demonstration of joy and triumph at Nagpore; where I was looked upon by the natives as a second Ramchunder, and by my brother officers as a deuced lucky chap, to have had such an opportunity of paying my court to the Burra Sahib. As

for the soldiers, they had a week's jollification on the strength of the general's largesse and the plunder they had picked up after the slaughter of the Pindarries; for the elephants, camels, &c., with their valuable lading, passed into the hands of the prize agent, to be accounted for, perhaps, ten or twenty years after. Some of the men had got their caps full of pearls, and others had boxes of diamonds, rubies, and emeralds, hawking about for sale at any prices they could get for them; while many of their wives were seen strutting about in costly Cashmere shawls, altogether unconscious of their value.

Sir Nicholas Pipkin honestly, but coldly, paid me the thousand rupees promised for the rescue of his wife and child, which I distributed amongst my companions in arms. He also gave a series of entertainments to celebrate their marvellous rescue; and I had once more the happiness to be received by Julia in her splendid mansion as a favoured and, indeed, as a highly-honoured guest.

But though Sir Nicholas, or, as he was familiarly called, "old Nick," could not, in common decency, help appointing me to the rank of acting captain, pending the result of an application to the governor-general for permanent promotion; yet I believe he never forgave me for the night I passed, the reader knows how innocently, with his wife, in the banyan-tree; for he not only would not offer me a place on his personal staff, as everybody expected he would, but he eagerly availed himself of an opportunity which soon after occurred of sending me into honourable banishment.

As this opportunity sprang from the system which has been pursued in India for the multiplication of our enormous territories, from the days of Clive to the present, perhaps the reader, however little disposed to the consideration of Indian affairs, may not dislike a "wrinkle" on so interesting and, indeed, so picturesque a subject, if I may use that term to anything in the shape of political swindling.

Amongst the petty independent principalities which abound in this part of India, was that of Ruttunpoor; the rajah of which had been implicated in the hostile proceedings of Apa Sahib, and had once given that ex-sovereign shelter in the course of his flight from the Company's troops. The British having now so completely triumphed at Poona and Nagpore, and, indeed, throughout the whole of this warlike region, it was deemed a favourable opportunity to give the rajah of Ruttunpoor a good hearty squeeze, if not to crush him altogether.

A vakeel was accordingly despatched to the capital of this doomed monarch, to acquaint him that his complicity with Apa Sahib was known to the governor-general: it was further hinted that his lordship bahaudur was aware of a certain flaw in the rajah's title to the musnud; and that the rightful heir was living in exile and obscurity. It was not that we cared a rush about the justice of the matter; for one sovereign *de facto* was always, in our eyes, worth fifty sovereigns *de jure*. But the fact gave us an advantage over the rajah, of which we were determined to avail ourselves.

With this object in view, he was invited to receive a British resident at his court, an honour which he did not dare to refuse; and one was accordingly sent thither. These residents, who, generally

speaking, are nothing more than privileged intriguers, are chosen indiscriminately from the civil and military classes; for wherever a young man evinces a ready talent at acquiring Oriental languages, and an adequate degree of that sort of cunning which Bacon calls "crooked wisdom," he is in a fair way of filling some position of this description, and of becoming, sooner or later, as Jack Dillon said, a *milliner*.

The small end of the wedge being thus insinuated into the principality of Ruttunpoor, the resident, who, to do him justice, was eminently fitted for his situation, lost no time in driving it home. He first told the rajah that he had discovered a dangerous internal conspiracy against him, for the purpose of replacing the rightful heir upon the musnud; and strongly urged him to apply for a subsidiary force of British troops, to guard him against the threatened danger. The rajah, however, declined this expedient, with many thanks to the resident for his protecting care.

The latter next got up a little panic about an intended Pindarrie incursion into the country, to plunder and lay waste the rajah's capital and palace, and again proffered a subsidiary force as the grand panacea; but the rajah said that the Pindarries were his very good friends, and that he was always in the habit of purchasing their forbearance by the payment of an annual *peishcush*, or tribute.

This was all skillful fencing on the part of the rajah, but the resident was not a man to be so easily baffled; he therefore sent a private communication to the rajah of Bopaul, through our resident at that court, directing him to rake up an old claim of disputed frontier against the rajah of Ruttunpoor, and to make a demonstration as if determined to carry the question *vi et armis*; thus making use of one *subsidized* rajah to *subsidize* another, as tame elephants are employed in the jungle to conquer their savage brethren.

The poor rajah, at length, worn out by his fears and the resident's importunities, began to entertain the notion of the subsidiary force, the only obstacle now being the enormous expense it would entail upon him.

"Bah, bah! your highness. It shan't cost you a single rupee," said the resident.

The rajah opened his large eyes in amazement, at this.

"You have, I think," said the resident, "a district in the Shalabala hills, inhabited by Goands, who never pay their chout as they ought to do."

"They never do," replied the rajah. "May their sisters be defiled for the same!—unless I enforce it by my troops—a remedy which is worse than the disease."

"That district," said the resident, "is exactly so many square miles in extent, and it ought to produce so many lakhs of Sicca rupees annually."

"You are quite right in your calculation," said the rajah, wondering at the accuracy of his information.

"Now then," continued the resident, "deducting so many thousand rupees annually for the expense of collection and loss by runaways, &c., we shall have a net income from Shalabala of so many hundred

thousand; which will just cover the pay and allowances, cost of equipments, clothing, arms, accoutrements, wear and tear, &c., of one thousand British troops—say a thousand; leaving a small margin to purchase baubles and lollipops for the Goand chiefs, to keep them in good humour. Now, you make over that district, in full jaghire, to the Honourable Company Bahaudur; leave the collection of the chout to me—I understand that business—and the troops shall be speedily in full march for your capital.”

The rajah consented—how could he possibly do otherwise? Sir Nicholas Pipkin was directed to organize a subsidiary force for Ruttunpoor; and nine hundred sepoy, together with my company of Europeans, fifty light dragoons, and a field train of artillery, were marched thither, under the command of Colonel McClish.

The reader is now, I hope, conversant with the *modus operandi* by which we generally gain a firm footing in what are called the subsidized states of India. It may, however, be as well to acquaint him that, when it becomes desirable, in Yankee phrase, to annex said territory to the British possessions, properly so called, the resident picks a quarrel with the rajah; generally on the subject of a long arrears of pay and allowances for the subsidiary force; or else of advances to the rajah out of his own money, with interest and compound interest thereon. Then insues a long series of bullying on the one side, and concessions on the other; till, at last, the unhappy rajah, finding himself involved in an inextricable web of political legerdemain, and bewildered by the complicated nature of the accounts perpetually poked before his eyes in huge iron-bound ledgers, consents to get rid of the *imbroglio*, to cede his rajahship to the Honourable Company Bahadur, *in secula seculorum*: in consideration of which he receives a handsome pension,—a small per centage on his own revenues,—and retires to the holy city of Benares, where we have frequently more dethroned sovereigns assembled, as our pensionaries, than ever met together at the carnival of Venice.

Ruttunpoor is in the wildest part of Gundwana, a vast extent of unexplored country, lying to the eastward of Nagpore, amongst the hills and fastnesses of which the Mahanuddy takes its rise, and carries down, in the rainy season, an immense volume of water to the Bay of Bengal, laden with agricultural riches, if it suited the Company's close-borough system to admit of its being turned to purposes of irrigation.

As we marched through this uncivilized region, I was delighted to find myself once more amongst mountains, rocks, lakes, rivers, and waterfalls, and gave a loose to my fancy, depicting to myself the pleasures I should enjoy in my favourite pursuits of hunting, shooting, fishing, and sketching picturesque scenery, in a country so fresh, as it were, from the hand of nature, the savage features and romantic beauties of which were not as yet marred by the money-grubbing pursuits of trade, commerce, and manufactures.

Nor was I disappointed. For the first three months, I was in a species of elysium; and shot, fished, and hunted so much, killing so many boars, tigers, and boa-constrictors, that I began to fancy myself

almost as great a junglewalla as the mighty Croker himself. I became an immense favourite with the simple inhabitants of the country, who called me the Burra Feringhee Shikar, or great European hunter; and, as I constantly freed them from the wild beasts that destroyed their gardens and ruined their harvests, never abused or ill-treated them, and always gave them cherry-merry when they attended my hunting-parties, they looked upon me as one of a superior species to the ordinary run of my countrymen.

Ruttunpoor itself was a large rambling town, consisting, as usual, of lofty pagodas, huge ruts or procession cars, dusty, hot, oppressive bazaars, green-mantled stagnant tanks, and clay-built houses; the walls of which were plentifully plastered with cow-dung, and ornamented with perpendicular stripes of various-coloured pigment.

But the palace of the rajah was its great redeeming feature. This was a lofty and a handsome building, so far, at least, as Hindoo architecture can be so called; situated on a lovely island in the midst of a splendid lake that stretched away amongst surrounding hills of great picturesque beauty in form and outline. The palace, covered with polished chunam, of dazzling whiteness, was embowered in extensive gardens, the lofty trees and shady alleys of which were minutely reflected in the deep blue waters of the lake; and here the fancy might picture to itself the beauties of the Zenana, straying amidst the mazy labyrinth, or gazing complacently at their own lovely forms in the natural mirror at their feet.

A light-built cantonment had been erected for us on a rising ground, on the borders of the lake, commanding the rajah's palace; a circumstance which he did not at all relish; but his objections were over-ruled by the plausible arguments of Mr. Slimley, our resident at his court.

This was a skeleton-looking person, of middle age, whom all the good feeding in India had failed to fill out to the ordinary dimensions of the human figure. He was excessively vain, arrogant, and cunning; distrustful, to a degree that bordered on monomania, of the intentions of others, and equally deceitful and treacherous in his own. Being, however, a man of some education and knowledge of the world, he had obtained so complete a mastery over McClish, that in a little time the latter became, through his instigation, utterly detested by every man and officer under his command; while courts of inquiry and courts martial were of such daily and almost hourly occurrence, that one might say we had been sent to this remote district for the sole purpose of studying the art of tormenting by martial law.

Our mess-room, especially, was made such a focus of intrigue and espionage, that it was absolutely unsafe to sit there long after dinner; but when the resident dined with us, which he frequently did, we felt as if the very demon of discord was amongst us, *in propria persona*.

My great delight on such occasions, when I could get away after dinner from the colonel and his Mephistopheles, who were eternally boring me with questions of state policy and diplomatic intrigue, was to rush down to the lake, throw myself into my boat, and push off by

myself into the silent waters; paddling occasionally along the glassy surface, and at times lying down with my face towards heaven, inhaling the delicious breeze of evening, as I woke the surrounding echoes with my flute.

There is something in the contemplation of the starry host, that exalts and purifies the mind, sifting it, as it were, from the worldly dross with which it is so heavily clogged, and fitting it for that celestial intercourse which is the aspiration in every age and clime, of saint, of savage, and of sage. True it is, however, that often, as I gazed upon the chaste, cold moon, as she held her peerless course through the cloudless ether, thoughts of human affections would rush into my breast; and memory, too faithful memory, would conjure up to view the sylph-like forms of the still dear objects of my youthful love: my tender Harriet, my fascinating Mary, my sainted Juliana, and my gentle Julia. But I thought of them as of so many angels, who, though lost to me upon earth, I yet fervently hoped to meet again in heaven.

Often, also, as I floated in the deep shadow of the rajah's palace, whose luxuriant gardens stretched down to the water's edge, the plantain and the acacia dipping their beautiful leaves in the translucent tide, while the aromatic fragrance of the night-blowing flowers loaded the sluggish zephyr, that faintly played amongst the branches—often, I say, when gazing on the marble-like pile, whose glossy surface shone brightly in the moonbeams, as it rose majestically from the dark dense foliage that clung around it lovingly—often have I thought of the sorrows that haply wrung the breast of many a fair captive, victim to the caprice or jealousy of the ugly old monster who now held sway within its walls; and, as the wild notes of the Peyoo came gushing from some neighbouring thicket, I would say to myself, "'Tis the last sad wail of some breaking heart!"

On one of these occasions, while paddling slowly by the palace garden, hidden, as I thought, from all eyes in the broad shadow of its lofty trees, a voice suddenly exclaimed:

"Feringhee! Feringhee Sahib!"

At first I imagined it was only fancy; but the words were repeated in that soft musical voice peculiar to the Hindoo female; and looking towards the spot whence the sounds appeared to proceed, I observed a figure in white standing by the water's edge, in the deep shade of a mango-tope.

Predisposed as I was for some romantic adventure, I instantly pulled for a flight of marble steps that descended deep into the water; and, jumping ashore, found myself close to a young and very handsome woman, whom, in the delirium of the moment, I caught in my arms and fervently kissed.

But she quickly released herself from my grasp, and exclaimed, with a frown that was almost a smile,—

"Acha ni, sahib!"

I made a thousand apologies for my rudeness, which, however, I was about to repeat; but she kept me at arm's length, and said, with a voice of sweet reproachful gravity,—

"Stand back, Feringhee Sahib, and behave yourself; or I'll have you served as Bum Sah was served by Bulbudder Singh."

"Pray how was that, you sweet creature?" I demanded, taking a place beyond the line of demarcation, the better to hear how Bum Sah was served by Bulbudder Singh.

The little gipsy was, however, on the alert, and took a side-step to the rear, as Pat says; preserving her distance with as much precision as if she had been drilled by my old militia friend, Marshal Saxe himself.

"You must know," she replied with arch gravity, "that Bum Sah was a Goorkha sirdar, in the army of the Rajah Bulbudder Singh; and a brave and handsome man, too, as you yourself, Feringhee Sahib——"

"My dear soul!" I exclaimed, about to make a rush, for all my celestial imaginings had vanished into thin air; but the provoking little jade kept her distance very adroitly, as she went on with her story.

"Bum Sah," she said, "had the temerity to fall in love with one of the rajah's wives; but the great Bulbudder Singh had him inveigled into this very garden, tied up in a sack, and pitched into the lake, from the very spot on which you now stand."

This was a damper to the most ardent passion; but still I was about to continue my approaches, in spite of the horror I always felt at drowning in a sack; when the sweet girl, for such she certainly was, intreated me to be patient, and to answer truly such questions as she should put to me.

"That I will," I replied; "and I swear by the skull chaplet of Doorga!—by the blue throat of Mahadeo!—by the soul-inspiring conch of Vish——"

"Hush, hush!" cried the pretty Hindoo, laying her dear little hand on my lips. "You must never pronounce that sacred name, Feringhee Sahib."

"Then I swear by yourself!" I said, giving her another loving hug, "to answer truly every question you put to me."

"Bhote acha!" she replied. "In the first place, then, do you belong to the sahib logue?"

"Unquestionably," I said, the blood of the Blakes silently prompting my reply.

"Show me your hands," said the inquisitive monkey.

I held out my hands, and she passed her own little velvet paws over the palms.

"Acha!" she exclaimed, with an accent of satisfaction. "You malluk;* you no working man—you no bunya."

"Heaven forbid!" I replied. "I hate the whole tribe of money-grubbers."

"Are you married?" she next demanded.

"No," I replied; "but hope soon to be with you."

She shook her head as she asked, finally,—

"Are you brave enough to risk your life for the rescue of a beautiful and injured princess?"

"Certainly," I replied, "and I'll convince you of it this instant, if you will step with me into my boat."

"It is not for myself," she replied, "that I ask these questions, but for one a thousand times more good and beautiful than I am;

* Of gentle blood.

and if you have spirit enough to go with me, you shall see and converse with her."

"I'll go with you," I replied, "to the end of the world."

Upon this, the pretty she Mercury clapped her hands thrice; when a dingy-looking figure emerged from among some trees at a little distance, and stood in an attitude of deference and respect.

"Trimbuckjee," said my guide, "take charge of the Feringhee Sahib's boat, and see that it be not discovered. Then wait his return, you know where; and see him safe out of the island."

"Acha! Lachema Beebee," responded the stranger, in a deep voice; the tones of which I thought I recognized, as he glided like a ghost down to the water's edge, and disappeared with my canoe.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE RAJPOOTNI.

LACHEMA, then, drawing a scarf from her neck, wound it several times round my eyes; and, taking me by the hand, she led me silently on to a chunam walk, along which we glided as noiselessly as possible, till we came to some obstruction, apparently a door or gateway. Here she stopped, and whispered softly to me:—

"You are about to encounter great dangers; but it is not too late to retract, if you don't feel your heart firm enough to meet them."

"Put your hand on my heart," I replied, "and it will answer your question."

She did so, and said, "I don't think you have any heart at all; for I can't feel it beat."

"It is in your own keeping," I said. "You may do with it what you please."

She pressed my hand almost imperceptibly, and we resumed our progress.

I could perceive that we had now quitted the open air, and were, apparently, going along an inclosed verandah; for I could hear the clang of arms, as if of sentinels relieving in the court-yard; but, as we were not challenged, I concluded we were not visible to them. We ascended one or two flights of steps, and I felt myself in the open air again, as if we had mounted to the roof of the palace; and then we descended, down, down, as if plunging into the bowels of the earth.

I frankly confess that the fate of Bum Sah, tied up in his sack at the bottom of the lake, struck once or twice discordantly on my fancy; and I was by no means reassured by my previous knowledge of the rajah's truculent character. This might be an episode in some plot of his to get rid of his subsidiary force, that he might resume the rich jaghire he had appropriated for their payment; and the dungeon might soon extinguish me, as effectually as the lake did the poor Goorkha sirdar. But I have always had unlimited confidence in woman, especially if young and handsome; and, as I felt the pressure of my guide's soft hand, I shook off the horrible

imaginings that had for a moment disturbed my mind, proceeding boldly to unravel the mystery of the adventure.

At last we stopped; and I could hear the sound of a veena, touched skilfully, and accompanied by a sweet voice singing a simple, plaintive melody. The heavy *purdehs* of a doorway, apparently, were then drawn aside; and I was led forward a few steps on a carpet in whose soft texture I sank almost up to the ankles, in an atmosphere redolent of a thousand perfumes, while the plash of water fell upon my ear with a lulling sound, intermingled with the dying notes of the veena, which ceased altogether as the scarf fell from my eyes.

In looking round, I found myself in the centre of a small apartment, richly gilt, and adorned with all the minute and delicate tracery and *filagree* work peculiar to Oriental taste. A couple of small fountains were playing rose-water into marble basins; and three or four perfuming rods were burning in different directions. At the further end of the room, a female figure, closely veiled, was seated on a *musnud*, or thick gold-embroidered cushion; and behind her stood four female attendants, unveiled, young and handsome, waving snow white *chowries*, richly mounted, over her head. On the right hand side of the principal figure, and at a little distance, stood my pretty conductress, *Lachema*, in an attitude of respectful humility; her head slightly bent down, and her arms crossed upon her breast.

I made a profound obeisance to this mysterious lady, placing my hand upon my heart in token of devoted service, and then stood erect to await her commands.

She motioned me to sit down on a *musnud* that was placed nearly in her front; and having gathered up my legs tailor-fashion, as well as I could on so unwonted a seat, she touched a little silver gong that stood by her side, with a bar of the same metal. At this signal, the *purdehs* of a doorway were drawn back, and ten pretty young females entered, bearing silver trays covered with rich velvet cloths embroidered with pearls; all but the two first, one of whom carried a *chillumchee* with rose-water, and the other a *kincaub* napkin of cloth of gold.

Having dipped my fingers into the rose-water, and wiped them with the napkin, the trays were set down before me on the beautiful carpet, and uncovered; they contained a variety of fruits and confections, with three or four goblets of various sorts of sherbet. Some of these I slightly tasted, and sipped a little of the sherbet, when a fresh *chillumchee* and napkin being handed to me, I performed my ablutions as before, and the whole apparatus was removed in perfect silence and good order.

The veiled lady seemed to derive much satisfaction from the manner in which I went through this first act of the drama, as indicating an acquaintance with the customs of good society, and immediately withdrew the envious screen which had hitherto concealed her peerless features. Peerless indeed they were, of the most perfect contour and faultless proportions; while a brighter complexion than that of the fairest Brahminee I had ever seen, imparted to them more than ordinary vivacity, which was chastened and improved by the soft, lovable, expression of her large gazelle-like eyes.

Whether it was that I regarded the withdrawal of the veil as a tacit challenge, or was electrified by such a blaze of the most perfect beauty, I cannot well say; but I sprang to my feet with the intention of prostrating myself before the lovely vision. With a smile of ineffable sweetness, however, she motioned me to resume my seat, and I obeyed her as one under the spell of an enchantress.

"Are you," said the beautiful rajpootni, in a voice of soft melody, "are you the Burra Feringhee Shikar, whom they call Blake Sahib?"

"May it please your highness," I replied, "that is my name."

"I have heard much about you," she was pleased to say. "My people—for you see before you the Beebee of Ruttunpoor—my people tell me that you are as brave as Ramchunder, and as bountiful as Vicramaditya. I have therefore sought your assistance in an enterprise of much difficulty and peril: tell me, frankly and boldly, if you feel disposed to accord it."

I arose from my seat, made a profound inclination, placed my hand upon my heart, and said that in all things, and in defiance of every peril, I was ready and willing to obey her commands.

With another smile of heavenly sweetness, the princess, whose high heroic name was Coornandati, thanked me for my ready acquiescence; and then proceeded to explain the nature of the enterprise.

The rajah, it seems, who then occupied the musnud, and who was father to the beautiful creature before me, was, as I before hinted, a usurper; his nephew, Pertaub Singh, being the rightful heir, as son to the late rajah. Pertaub and Coornandati had been betrothed at an early age by that sovereign, who was brother to the present; but the latter, by a piece of treachery common enough in Asiatic courts, had not only set his nephew aside and driven him into banishment, but also deprived him of his betrothed bride, whom he kept in his palace, a hostage, as it were, for the forbearance of her lover. To rejoin this lover now, though in exile, was the first wish of Coornandati's heart; and to enable her to do this, was the service she sought for at my hands.

Though somewhat disappointed, I confess, at being thus called on to convey to another, beauty which I coveted for myself, I never hesitated for an instant, but entered zealously into the plan of escape; according to which I was to be ready with a boat and three or four trusty servants, on the third night thence, at the spot where I had landed, which was a very retired part of the palace grounds. In the mean-time, the princess was to give notice of her coming to Pertaub Singh, that he might be ready to meet her on the furthest shore of the lake, with horses and attendants, to convey her far beyond the reach of her cruel parent.

All points being adjusted, the princess again struck the silver gong, and two female attendants entered; one of whom bore a silver tray, containing the usual offering of pawn-siparee, or betel-nut, the ordinary manner in which visitors are licensed to depart from the royal presence. But instead of allowing a menial to present it, the princess, as an especial mark of honour, arose from her musnud, thereby displaying a majestic figure of faultless symmetry and proportions; with a bewitching smile she handed me the salver herself;

while, with bended knee, I accepted the gracious compliment, and thus took leave of the lovely Coornandati, whose hand I was graciously permitted to kiss.

I was led out by my pretty conductress, Lachema; but, as a delicate proof of confidence, I was not, on this occasion, blindfolded as before, and, therefore, had an opportunity of admiring many of the beauties of the palace. Indeed, I rather prolonged this indulgence; less, perhaps, to gratify my taste for Oriental art, than for the pleasure of flirting a little with my pretty guide.

At the outer gate, Lachema gave me in charge to the male attendant I before had a glimpse of; and in him, to my surprise, I recognized a brother-sportsman, named Trimluckjee, who had frequently assisted at my hunting-matches. Indeed, I began now to suspect that he had been sent thither expressly to sift my character and disposition; and this I found was the fact, for he was a prime confidant of the Princess Coornandati. This trusty fellow led me to my boat, which he had effectually concealed under the wide-spreading branches of an enormous fig-tree; and having given him a suitable largesse, I returned, unobserved, to cantonments.

The following day I received a visit from Trimluckjee; who having satisfied me by his credentials that he was fully authorized by the princess to act in the matter, we concocted between us a final plan of proceedings. In pursuance of this, on the third night after, at twelve o'clock precisely, for the Hindoos are an early people in retiring, I arrived at the same spot of the rajah's garden, with a larger and more commodious boat; accompanied by my pay-sergeant and three trusty Light Bobs, with their arms and accoutrements, ready in every respect to act against any enemy whom I might indicate as such.

We had not waited here above five minutes, when the lovely rajpootni arrived, with Lachema and Trimluckjee her only attendants. I handed her into the boat, and Lachema and Trimluckjee followed: the latter placed himself in the stern sheets to steer; my trusty Light Bobs grappled the muffled oars, at which they were very expert; and, amidst the most profound silence, we were soon beyond the reach of pursuit.

After a pretty sharp row of nearly two hours, we at length reached our destination; where we found the young prince waiting for us, with a souwarrie of thirty mounted rajpoots, determined-looking fellows, all armed to the teeth: there were also two kujavas, or carriages slung between camels,—an expeditious mode of travelling in the East,—for the accomodation of the princess and Lachema.

Pertaub Singh was really a fine-looking fellow; upwards of six feet high, elegantly formed, and of a majestic presence. When the princess introduced me as her rescuer from captivity, he immediately took off his richly-jewelled turban, and laid it at my feet; the greatest compliment in the East that one human being can pay to another. With every mark of profound respect, I took the turban from the ground, and replaced it on the head of the prince; who then embraced me, exclaiming in a fine manly voice,—

“Noble Feringhee, fortune has placed it out of my power at present to acknowledge the deep debt of gratitude I owe you; but you have

given into my possession a treasure more precious than the heaven of Indra; and if I ever forget it, may the fires of Patala burn me hereafter, and for evermore!

"Blake Sahib," said the princess, "accept this trifle from me, as a slight token of my gratitude." Then, taking a bracelet from her arm, she clasped it on the wrist of my right hand, exclaiming, with a smile that is still fresh in my memory, "Now you are my rakhee-bund bâte.*"

Thus I parted from the illustrious Rajpoots, whom I then saw for the last time; and after a rapid row across the lake we arrived at cantonments, unobserved by all except a couple of drowsy sepoy sentries, who naturally concluded that we had been out on duty. On going to my room, my pay-sergeant showed me a bag of two hundred rupees, which Trimbuckjee had put into his hand when coming away, as cherry-merry, he said, for the rowers; and thus terminated, for the present, an adventure which had originally promised, as I thought, a very different *dénoûment*.

CHAPTER LXII.

ALPHABET HOPKINS.

THE sudden and unaccountable disappearance of the beebee of Ruttunpoor caused, as may be imagined, a degree of wonder and consternation, not only in the palace, but throughout the country, unequalled since the abduction of Sita by the ten-headed giant of Lankadwipa. Nine people out of ten looked upon it as a supernatural event altogether; an escapade of Mahadeo, out on the loose from his jealous consort, and longing for a mortal mistress of such unequalled charms. But the rajah was of a different opinion, and so was the resident; both being somewhat sceptical on points of mythology, and even more than doubtful about spiritual interference in mundane matters generally—especially in the abduction of pretty young women.

These two astute persons, therefore, laid their heads together, with a view to discover the retreat of the princess; as also to outwit each other, and gain some personal advantage in the course of the inquiry. The resident was not long in fixing upon me, as in some way or other connected with this mysterious affair; taking up the matter, therefore, in a jocular strain, he said, shaking his lanky sides with affected laughter.

"Blake, my dear boy, you are such a rollicking fellow, and such a favourite with the ladies, that I'll lay my life you know something of the matter. Come, let us have the particulars: 'tis a capital joke, to be sure, to carry off the heiress of that old curmudgeon. Your countrymen, we know, are famous for running away with heiresses. Ha! ha! ha!"

But there was a lurking devil in his eye, that kept me wide-awake

* Bracelet-bound brother.

to his treachery, and I turned off the joke upon himself, with a little of his own persiflage, which nettled him exceedingly, though he still maintained the mask, and appeared even more friendly and familiar than ever. A thousand conjectures were hazarded on the subject at mess, but all equally absurd and wide of the mark; the colonel profoundly remarking that it was probably one of those hyrcaniums of natur' that would never be enveloped, like Junius with the iron mask, and the magical books of Sybil Grey.

At length the mystery was solved by the arrival of a vakeel from the court of Oodipoor; where Pertaub and the princess had taken refuge with their kinsman, the rana of that state, which was under the Company's protection, though not yet subsidized.

The vakeel was the bearer of a message from his highness, Pertaub Singh, legitimate rajah of Ruttunpoor, to the usurper, Gorumchunder, summoning him to vacate the musnud of that state within the period of three lunar months, under penalty of being punished as a contumacious rebel to his rightful sovereign; promising him, in the event of due and prompt compliance with this royal mandate, a pension befitting the uncle and father-in-law of the rajah aforesaid; that he might retire to the holy city of Bernares, and live there in ease and luxury, with other ex-sovereigns, who, tired of the cares of royalty, had yielded their crowns and sceptres to their dearly beloved ally, the Honourable Company Bahaudur: resting perfectly satisfied that, when death should come to them in that divine abode, which was formed of musk instead of common earth, and supported upon the trisul of Mahadeo, their next transmigration must necessarily be happy, if even it did not amount to final absorption into the essence of the Deity, which all good Hindoos look forward to as the consummation of eternal bliss.

His Highness, the Rajah Pertaub Singh, further acquainted the usurper, Gorumchunder aforesaid, that the final nuptial rite had passed between him and the Beebee Coornandati, in the great temple of Vishnu, at Oodipoor; that her highness, now ranee of Ruttunpoor, sent her dutiful and affectionate respects to her father aforesaid; and besought him, of all good-will and loving kindness, to comply at once with the demand of her husband and sovereign, the only legitimate rajah of Ruttunpoor, Pertaub Singh, Bahaudur Jung, Protector of the stars, Grasper of the lightning, &c.

The explosion of wrath which shook the frame of the old usurper, on receipt of this lofty mandate, was absolutely tremendous. He smashed to atoms, with his battle-axe, the valuable crystal bell of the hookah he was smoking; a present, by the way, from the Honourable Company Bahaudur; he ordered the vakeel to be stitched up in a sack, and sent to the bottom of the lake, to keep company with Bum Sah; and directed thirty of his daughter's female attendants to be buried alive, for not discovering their mistress's intended flight.

The ladies very stoutly declared their readiness to die; but, as pure Rajpootnis, they never would betray their salt. Their heroism was, accordingly, on the point of being put to this formidable test, when the resident, who had been apprised of the posture of affairs, arrived in his state barge; demanded a private audience of the usurper; told

him plainly that he must, on no account, lay violent hands on the vakeel of a state under the Company's protection, and that, for every individual murder he might commit, even in his own palace, he would be tried by the laws of England, and dealt with accordingly.

This drove the old man frantic: he danced about the room, tore down the window-curtains, smashed the valuable English chandelier, and swore, by the skull-chaplet of Doorga, that if the resident presumed to utter another word on such matters, he would have him stitched up in the same sack with the vakeel, and they might compare notes together at the bottom of the lake.

"Will your highness do me the favour," said the resident, very coolly, "to look out of this window, and tell me what you see on yonder rising ground?"

"What do I see?" cried the rajah, foaming with rage; for he had taken a more than usual dose of opium that morning, and it was now in full operation; "I see your cursed cantonment, of course."

"What do you see in front of that cantonment?" asked the resident very demurely.

"I see a battery of three twelve-pounders, three nines, six sixes, and two howitzers," replied the rajah, with astonishing accuracy for an Asiatic prince.

"If I am not back in the cantonment in half an hour from this," said the resident, very composedly looking at his watch, "those guns and howitzers are to open instantly on your palace, and knock both you and it into a million fragments."

This was an *argumentum ad hominem* which the rajah could not get over: he threw himself upon an ottoman, covered his face with a kincaub napkin; and, after five minutes' profound meditation, rose with the most calm and gentlemanly deportment, shook the resident cordially by the hand, and said that everything should be settled according to his wish.

Slimley, whose great boast it was that nobody had ever yet surpassed him in gentlemanly deportment, returned the rajah's pressure with interest; assured him of protection against all the machinations of Pertaub Singh; and further told him that he had a clue to the principal agent in his daughter's flight, who should be punished to his heart's content. In the evening, Slimley told us at mess as much of this interview as he thought proper; and on this occasion he was so kind, so friendly, and, indeed, so affectionate towards myself in particular, that I began to think I had mistaken his character, and that so much candour could not possibly conceal an *arrière pensée* to my disadvantage.

The following morning, while I was admiring the bracelet bestowed upon me by the princess of Ruttunpoor, which was of real diamonds, worth, as I supposed, four or five thousand rupees, the Tappall arrived; and, amongst my letters, there was one from the headquarters of the Governor-General, which were then on the banks of the Chumbul. Wondering what correspondent I could have in that distinguished quarter, I broke the seal; and, running my eye down to the bottom of the page, I saw that it came from Alphabet Hopkins.

This very unexpected epistle was conceived in the following terms :—

“MY DEAR BLAKE,— Acting as military sec., *pro tem.*, in the absence of Colonel Galt, a secret report, of which you are the object, has necessarily passed through my hands, in its progress to the eyes of the Governor-General.

“Without stopping to animadvert on the nefarious system of secret reporting, which has crept into the army, Heaven knows how, though fit only for the Spanish Inquisition, I hasten to send you a copy of this atrocious document, which, without containing a single distinct or properly defined charge, has, by its vague generalities, cast such a mesh of inferences around you, as may be productive of ill consequences if not at once met and refuted. It purports to come from your own commanding officer; but I suspect that limb of Satan, Slimley, has had more than one finger in the pie; therefore be on your guard against his proffered friendship.

“I need not hint to you that I should like my name not to appear in this transaction; but if it be necessary for your justification, make use of it and welcome.

“Your late exploit in rescuing Lady Pipkin from the Pindarries is much talked of here, and lauded by all, not excepting your old antagonist, and now faithful friend,

“G. W. B. A. C. HOPKINS.”

The inclosure was certainly conceived in the most wily and Jesuitical terms that ever disciple of Machiavel put upon paper; the composition being far beyond the ability of poor McClish. It represented me as always in the jungle, surrounded by hosts of wild and warlike natives, whose ill-feeling towards the reigning rajah was patent to all; that I had made myself excessively popular with all the subsidiary force, men and officers, Europeans as well as natives; that, instead of sitting with my brother officers at the mess of an evening, I was in the constant habit of paddling my boat round the rajah's palace and gardens in the lake, as if to reconnoitre points of attack, &c. &c.; and that, under all the circumstances of the case, seeing that a desperate pretender was actually hatching plots to disturb the settlement of the country, which was the most conformable to the wishes and interests of the Honourable Company, he, Colonel McClish, could no longer refrain from bringing to the notice of the governor-general the very suspicious conduct of Acting-Captain Blake; especially as he was a young man of wild, enthusiastic notions, capable of any enterprise, however desperate, in pursuit of a fanciful theory of military heroism, altogether at variance with the fixed and settled principles of our diplomatic relations with the protected states of Central India. Finally, without asserting that Acting-Captain Blake was actually influenced by any sinister views or motives, it might perhaps be as well to advert to the difficulties, troubles, and losses occasioned at different times by desperate adventurers, both English and French, who had deserted from our service to that of certain native powers in India; and especially during the government of one of his lordship's predecessors, the most noble the Marquis Wellesley.

“My excellent Hopkins!” I exclaimed, after the first ebullition of wrath and astonishment had subsided, “your name shall certainly not appear in this transaction;” and I wrote him a letter to that effect, full of the gratitude which I really felt for his kind intervention. I then drew up a copy of the secret report, and sent it direct to Colonel McClish, with a letter demanding if it was a true copy of

any document forwarded by him to the governor-general; and if so, calling upon him to forward charges against me, which I was prepared instantly to meet.

After four or five hours' deliberation, during which Slimley and the colonel were closeted together, I received a communication from the latter; in which, shirking altogether my demand for a court-martial, he called upon me to state immediately, and in writing, the source from which I had derived the presumed copy of his secret report.

I instantly replied that I would not give him the required information; but that his silence leaving me no room to doubt the authenticity of the document in question, I must reiterate my demand for a court-martial.

In answer to this, the adjutant was sent to my quarters, with instructions to insist on my compliance with the commanding officer's demand; for which he was to wait ten minutes, and in default thereof he was to place me in arrest.

During this brief space, the adjutant and I chatted together on indifferent subjects; and when the ten minutes had expired, I delivered up my sword, declared my firm intention never to discover by what means I had obtained the copy of the secret report, and once more demanded a court-martial on my conduct.

For a fortnight or three weeks I remained thus in a state of suspense; at the end of which period the following general order was promulgated and transmitted for my guidance.

“GENERAL ORDER.

“Camp on the Chumbul.

“Acting Captain Blake is released from arrest, and will return to his duty.

“As Acting Captain Blake is now effective in the first battalion of his regiment, he will proceed to Europe forthwith to join that battalion.

“This officer will accordingly hold himself in readiness to proceed to the Presidency, there to wait the departure of the next Company's ship for Europe.”

I was thus about to be got rid of by a side wind. But, resolving not tamely to be treated in this summary manner, I drew up and forwarded direct an appeal to the governor-general; in which I brought before his excellency every possible argument against a decision which must necessarily be injurious to my future military prospects. This appeal was couched in language which I vainly imagined would not only satisfy the judgment, but touch the heart of the governor-general; but the only answer I received was the following coldly official letter from the acting military secretary:—

“SIR,—In reply to your letter to his Excellency the Governor-General, I have in command to say, that it should have been forwarded in the usual channel, through your commanding officer, and the general of division at Nagpoor.

“Under the circumstances, however, and in order to prevent delay, I am directed to inform you that the Governor-General has nothing to add to the Order already issued in your case.

“I have the honour, &c.,

“G. W. B. A. C. HOPKINS,

“Acting Military Secretary, *pro tem.*”

Under the same official cover, I found the following private note:—

“MY DEAR BLAKE,—Painful as it was to me to pen the accompanying official, you are too well acquainted with the service not to know that I had no alternative.

"I hasten, however, to tell you that, although Slimley and Co. have declared themselves in possession of the fullest evidence of your agency in the flight of the rajah's daughter, no despatch whatever, either public or private, is going home from this, likely in the slightest degree to militate against your future prospects.

"Under these circumstances, my dear fellow, I put it to your own good sense, whether it is not better to cry quits with enemies who are too powerful for you, too vindictive, and too unscrupulous in their means of annoyance. You have already gained a virtual triumph in being released from arrest, without even a reprimand, which throws all the odium of the transaction upon your adversaries. Consider, my dear Blake, that the war in India is at an end; there are no more Pindarries to shoot, and no more Pipkins to roost with in the banyan-tree! Aha! old fellow, have I got you there on the hip? Seriously, be advised; it is the opinion of many long heads in my department, and I hope will soon be your own.

"Many thanks for not blabbing; it is what I fully expected from your manly character.

"Yours, ever faithfully,

"G. W. B. A. C. HOPKINS."

But I fear I have become tedious, in my wish to make the reader acquainted with the base system of secret reporting which once prevailed in the British army, and of which the foregoing narrative is an "over-true tale." To be brief, then, I at length embraced the opinion of Hopkins, and wrote to him to that effect. I then arranged my affairs: gave over my company of Light Bobs, with many a sincere regret on both sides; and, having taken an affectionate leave of my brother officers, who, one and all, with the exception of the colonel's little clique, accompanied me on the first stage of my journey, I set off tappall for Madras; my baggage being reduced to a convenient weight and compass for half a dozen bangy-wallas.

When I reached the Presidency, which I did without any adventures worth recording, I learned that the ships were not expected from China for five or six weeks; to my great joy, therefore, as this period was likely to hang heavy on hands, I found that my old friend Croker had also arrived on sick-leave, from another part of the field-force; and greatly surprised he was to hear of my misadventures.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE LAUL-COPRA BAZAAR.

CROKER and I lived together in Black Town, very properly so called, within a few paces of the Laul-copra Bazaar, the hottest, the noisiest, and the dustiest market in all Asia; which, according to my old friend McCracken's phrase, is "saying a muckle deal." Our house, consisting of three rooms, a bath, and a verandah, was all on the ground floor: the verandah was open to and on a level with the street; and this being the principal thoroughfare to the market, our after-breakfast perambulations were not unfrequently interrupted by a furious charge of hairy sheep or staring buffaloes, who sometimes even forced an entrance into our *salle-à-manger*, to the great endangerment of our glass shades and tea-equipage.

I disliked the place very much myself, and often proposed to Croker that we should pitch our tents on the south beach; where, at least, we should have the sea-breeze to refresh us, and the mountain

surf to gaze at, as it sent the Masoolah boats with fearful velocity high and dry upon the sands, or pitched its catamarans aloft like straws upon "the vexed Bermoothes."

But Croker had got hold of a dozen jungle-wallahs, who paid him regular visits every market day; and he would sit squat upon his hams with these fellows for hours together, jabbering Malabars and Telinga, about bears and boars, and peacocks and jungle-fowl, and cheetahs and antelopes; till I would mount my nag in despair, and canter off to the fort, or the Mount-road, in the sun, to the amazement of old Indians, who scarcely dared to venture out in their palanquins or bullock-bandies.

One morning, as we paraded up and down this verandah of ours, standing by for a bolt, should any of our hairy visitants make a plunge at us; to my great astonishment, in walked Trimbucketjee, with a very elaborate salaam to myself, and the great Feringhee jungle-wallah, Croke Sahib, with whose name and fame he seemed to be quite familiar.

Having introduced Trimbucketjee to our parlour, I insisted on his sitting down in a chair; though, with characteristic modesty, he would have stood, or squatted himself down upon the chunam floor, which, in this *casa* of ours, was sadly dilapidated; displaying a variety of cracks, fissures, and small gulfs, for the reception of dust, cockroaches, centipedes, lizards, &c. &c.

After refreshments had been offered to Trimbucketjee, and sparingly partaken of by him, I inquired about the health and welfare of his master and mistress; and he immediately gave me a narrative which very much surprised Croker and myself.

Soon after my departure from Ruttunpoor, it seems, Prince Pertaub Singh, finding, by the shifts and delays of his father-in-law, that he was not likely to give up the musnud peaceably, appealed to the patriotism of his adherents. The consequence was that the whole country flew to arms to put down the usurper; the cantonments were surrounded, and though the troops were not attacked, their supplies were cut off. All communication was intercepted with Nagpoor; and there is no knowing to what extremities matters might have proceeded, but, at this critical period, Slimley, influenced by his own personal fears, betrayed his interesting *protégé* Gorumchunder into the hands of his son-in-law, who was forthwith installed as the legitimate sovereign of the country, taken under the protection of the Honourable Company Bahaudur, and peace, tranquillity, and general happiness fully restored. The life of Gorumchunder was not only preserved from the fury of the people by his generous son-in-law, but he was sent with a handsome pension to Benares; where, by the last accounts, he had become excessively devout, spending the whole of his time and income in the unbridled enjoyment of opium, tomtoms, dancing girls, and religious processions.

"The rajah and ranee," continued Trimbucketjee, in his best English, "send plenty compliments to you, Blake Sahib, and plenty sorry for the trouble of their beloved friend."

"I am deeply indebted to their highnesses, Trimbucketjee," I

replied, "for their kind remembrance of me. 'Tis a rose-bud in the desert of my grief—a nightingale in the garden of my happiness."

"They not write, sahib," returned Trimbucketjee, after a profound salaam, "fear of doing you bad; but something I got here his highness hope you take for love of him and Princess Coornandati."

Here Trimbucketjee produced from the multitudinous foldings of his turban, a small piece of a goose-quill, stopped at both ends with wax.

"What, Trimbucketjee!" I exclaimed, laughing; "has the rajah sent me a dose of poison?"

"Ho! sahib!" replied Trimbucketjee, very sententiously. "You right; 'tis poison, and 'tis not poison, all de same how you use it."

"Well, my good friend," I exclaimed, "I confess I cannot understand the marvellous properties of that which is, and at the same time is not, poison."

"There it is, sahib," said Trimbucketjee, unfolding the contents of the quill. "You may make that poison if you like; but me tink you know better."

It was a hoondie, or bill of exchange, on the principal Armenian house in Black Town for ten thousand rupees.

"Oh! my generous rajpoot!" I exclaimed. "Indeed I cannot accept this bounty of his. I am already more than rewarded for my trifling services by the splendid present of her highness, and the distinguished honour it has conferred upon me. Therefore, Trimbucketjee, take it back, with my grateful thanks——"

"That," interrupted Trimbucketjee, "would cost me my life. When I come away, rajah make me swear upon de Shastras, dat I no leave you quiet till you take hoondie."

"It can't be helped, Trimbucketjee," I said; "you must be forsworn then, for I cannot take it."

"But dat not all, sahib;" returned Trimbucketjee. "Rajah know you not like take money, all same as one bunya; den he tink first send you jewels and diamonds; but den he say you robbed and swindled, and after all money is best, and he swear himself by Shastras, if you not take, he will cut off my head."

"Then, Trimbucketjee," I replied, "you must go headless to Indra's heaven, for I cannot accept this money; and I'm sure my friend Croker is entirely of my opinion."

"By Jupiter, then, I'm not!" said Croker with vivacity. "See here, now, Percy Blake, this is the state of the case: through your means the rajah has got a most beautiful wife, who might otherwise have pined to death in her cruel captivity."

"Dat plenty true, Croke Sahib," said Trimbucketjee.

"Not only that," continued Croker; "but he has also recovered his kingdom, for which he did not dare to strike a blow while she was a prisoner."

"Acha, sahib!" chimed in Trimbucketjee. "No pundit in all Benares can say better dan Croke Sahib."

"Now I understand," said Croker, "that the revenue of Ruttunpoor is a crore and a half——"

"Two crore," interrupted Trimbucketjee; "two crore, every cowrie of it, Croke Sahib."

"Now only think," continued Croker, "what a mere flea-bite ten thousand rupees is, out of such a revenue as that."

"Acha! Croke Sahib! Bhote acha!" cried Trimbucketjee.

"Then, again," resumed Croker, "think what an insult you would offer to the proudest people on earth, if you reject the gift of this noble Rajpoot; who has received from you the service of a hero, and repays it like a generous monarch."

"Jey Baldeo!" exclaimed Trimbucketjee. "You plenty too much sense got, Croke Sahib. Me tink you find one muntra* in jungle, when you hunt ashgur and nilgaw."

In short, I was at length prevailed on by these two special pleaders, and at length accepted the hoondie, which removed a load of cares and anxieties from the mind of Trimbucketjee. He accordingly went on his way rejoicing, the bearer of two very grateful letters from me to the rajah and ranee; written in my very best Hindostanee, with a broad-nibbed reed pen, that would have been a treasure to Jean Jacques when he copied music for his livelihood.

A few days after the departure of Trimbucketjee, Croker exclaimed as we sat down to breakfast, rubbing his hands in high glee,—

"Percy, my boy, I have such a treat for you!"

"What is it?" I asked.

"You are always wishing for a change," he replied; "going to this tope, or to that pagoda, and all the rest of the balderdash; as if any rational being ever wished to go anywhere but the jungle."

"Quite a rational place of amusement," I said.

"Now, I'll tell you where we'll go to," continued Croker; "for you're a good boy, Percy, in spite of your sneering. We'll go to Pulicat."

"Where is Pulicat?" I demanded.

"Oh, Jupiter!" exclaimed Croker; "you don't know where Pulicat is; and you a poet, and painter, and all the rest of the balderdash."

"Well," I replied, "I have some faint recollection of having read that Pulicat was one of the original Dutch settlements on the Coromandel coast, where they made the famous Pulicat handkerchiefs——"

"And all the rest of the balderdash," exclaimed Croker, breaking in abruptly, "that you read of in books. Did any one, I wonder, ever learn anything useful from books? I never did, for I never read one in my life. Talk, man, talk is the thing to drive sense into a fellow's noddle; learn Telinga and Malabars, and talk with the jungle-wallahs; them's the fellows."

"But what of Pulicat?" I demanded.

"Why, it's the loveliest lake you ever saw in your life," he replied: "a sheet of water a hundred miles in circumference, as smooth as a mill-pond, and fringed all round with a belt of the most beautiful jungle, twenty miles across, swarming with peacocks, jungle-fowl, flamingos, florikens, and the most lovely boars, with tusks five inches long, that would rip you up before you could say Jack Robinson."

"That is an inducement," I replied.

"Silence, you monkey!" exclaimed Croker, absolutely foaming

* A wisdom-giving spell.

with the *unction* of his eloquent description; "antelopes, cheetahs, and black bears."

"Are there any boa-constrictors?" I asked.

"Oh, by Jupiter!" replied Croker; "see if I don't get you one to sit upon, as big as the last. But you'll come, Percy, won't you?" he continued, in a wheedling tone; "just for a week's sport or so."

"With all my heart," I replied. "Anywhere is better than the Laul-copra Bazaar in the hot winds."

We made our preparations accordingly; and, in a day or two set off with rifles, fowling-pieces, shot-bags and game-bags, hams, tongues, Bengal-humps, Laul shraub, tiger's milk, &c. &c., attended by a score of dogs of all breeds and nations, with as many peons, maty-boys, and cowrie-coolies. We looked like a Scythian migration from one of the steppes of Tartary, going to seek a new settlement in some fresher desert.

After a pleasant passage of six hours by the canal, from Madras, we at length arrived with bag and baggage, scrip and scrippage, guns and dogs,

"Mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
And cur of low degree,"

at the Kerrimungalum, or, as it is called by Europeans, the Bentineck Bungalow, on the eastern side of the lake; where, without let or hinderance, we established our head-quarters.

"My dubash, Mooto Kistna, having hunted up a couple of fine fowls and some eggs in a neighbouring village, soon manufactured a delectable curry for us; which, with a fry of fish from the lake, varied with cold tongue and Bengal-hump, satisfied the cravings of the inward man. We then adjourned to a finely chunamed verandah, where, each with a cheroot in his mouth and his legs cocked up on the balustrade, one with a glass of sangaree before him and the other a ditto of brandy-paunce, we enjoyed amazingly the scene before us.

The opposite, or western, shore of the lake, which is here about three miles wide, was flat, and seemed prettily diversified with hamlets and villages, embowered in the deep shade of mango and tamarind groves, which were charmingly reflected in the glassy bosom of the water; and over these, at some distance, a majestic range of mountains stretched their blue vapoury outline on the horizon. To the left stood the ancient and almost uninhabited town of Pulicat, nearly hidden by its surrounding foliage; over which peeped the dome of a mosque, the tiny spire of a Christian church, and the urns that crowned a few lofty tombs, wherein reposed the ashes of the earliest European settlers on this side of India. To the right, or north of our bungalow, the lake stretched away to a distance of forty miles; its shores fringed with masses of deep foliage, which vanished by degrees in the vapoury distance, where the waters seemed to lave the base of a lofty chain of cerulean mountains that bounded the prospect.

The surface of this splendid piece of water was diversified with several islands, all luxuriantly wooded; and as we gazed on the magnificent view, we laid our plans for the morrow's sport in that wonderfully attractive jungle, which seemed to offer its woodland charms

to our acceptance in such glorious profusion. Happily, as if to facilitate our project, a handsome boat lay moored close to the sandy beach that bounded the green slope which stretched from our bungalow down to the water-side: this, on inquiry, we found belonged, together with the bungalow, to the Madras government; and the peon in charge of the whole gave us *carte blanche* in the use of both, for a few of those rupees that work such wonders in the East.

We lost no time in availing ourselves of the sylvan pleasures within our reach; ploughing the peaceful waters of the lake with adventurous prow in all directions, and living for three or four days together in the wild recesses of the jungle; slaughtering in that time more of the *feræ naturæ* than any two idle gentlemen in the whole Carnatic.

During this period we returned occasionally to Bentinck Bungalow, to recruit our stock of European luxuries, and to despatch presents of game to our numerous friends at Madras, and other places in its vicinity: also to receive and answer such letters on business, or pleasure, as might find us out in our solitude. These duties despatched, we returned with increased zest to our beloved jungle.

At length the approach of the north-west monsoon warned me to return to Black Town, that I might be ready to embark without delay; as the arrival of the China fleet was looked for every instant, and ships never stopped long during that season, at their dangerous anchorage in the roadstead of Madras.

Croker, however, prevailed on me to have one or two days' more sport, and we accordingly started one morning for the extreme confines of the lake about forty miles distant; our only companion being Mustapha Beg, or big, as we called him, from his diminutive size. This was a Mussulman maty-boy of Croker's; who was very smart in handling the sails, tending the rigging, and running aloft to overhaul tacks and sheets that sometimes got foul in our manœuvres: more especially, and though last not least of his qualifications, he was an admirable hand at a curry.

After a good long sail, for there was not much of a breeze, we at length arrived at a part of the jungle that was altogether fresh ground to us; and immediately plunged into its recesses with that undefinable feeling of delight which the free and independent enjoyment of nature in all her primeval rudeness never fails to inspire.

I only wish the reader could have seen us in this savage life of ours, that surpassed in simple physical enjoyment any other description of life with which I am acquainted. We prepared for the labours of the day by an early and substantial breakfast of tea, coffee, eggs, curry and rice, and wild-boar steaks, the most delicious thing in the whole range of gastronomy. We then struck into the woods, with dogs and guns, rifle and fowling-piece each; which, with game-bags and shot-belts, were carried for us by such jungle-wallahs as we pressed into the service; who also carried our game as it fell before us—peacocks, florikens, antelopes, boars, &c.—for we rarely stooped to smaller prey. This we continued till five or six o'clock, going over an immense space of ground in the interim: being generally sheltered from the sun by the tamarind, mango, banyan, and

numerous other lofty trees ; and plunging into the lake, as the windings of our course brought us occasionally upon its woody banks. We then returned to our bivouac, where Mustapha had our tablecloth spread under the huge branches of a wide-spreading tree, and loaded with all sorts of roast, and boiled, and broiled, and devilled, and barbecued comestibles, till jaded appetite cried " Hold ! enough ! " Then, with coffee, delicious fruit, pure Madeira, and Bengal cheroots, we concluded the happy day ; and at ten o'clock retired to our boat, where we slept secure and undisturbed till morning, beneath a simple awning of cotton.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE BREAK-UP OF THE MONSOON.

THE latter part of this, our last day, had been uncommonly sultry : the breeze had died away, and an almost suffocating heat compelled us to throw off every article of dress which we could do without, as we sat enjoying our cheroots and brandy pawnee, after a late and excellent jungle dinner in which the culinary powers of Mustapha had been exerted to the utmost, and nothing had been left undone to tempt the flagging appetite to the high top-gallant of gastric happiness.

But a nervous restlessness still marred the fruition of our festive pleasure. Every now and then a hollow gust would sweep moaning, as it were, amongst the heavy foliage that surrounded us ; and, again subsiding, would leave us sweltering in intolerable heat. Occasionally, a few large drops of rain would come pattering amongst the leaves, spreading around a momentary freshness ; to be instantly succeeded, however, by a close and fetid atmosphere, charged with mephitic miasma, and bearing upon its sluggish tide myriads of musquitoes, sand-flies, and flying-bugs ; the latter incessantly flouncing into our tumblers, and causing an immediate necessity for a fresh brew.

There was a strange unwonted sound also in the jungle : which I can no otherwise describe than as a congregating and a creeping-together of all its savage denizens, to hold a hushed and terrified consultation on some approaching convulsion of nature that was taming their innate ferocity, and driving them into unnatural fellowship ; while, loud and stern, the deep, hoarse croaking of ten thousand bull-frogs soared painfully over the " whispering silence," in a dismal and ominous thorough bass.

" Acha ni, sahib ! " said Mustapha, with a suspicious glance at the heavens, which still displayed a clear, unclouded field of ether. " S'pose master like go now ; by-me-by plenty bobbery come."

We lingered, however, for another hour, talking over the pleasures of the day, and the occupations of the morrow ; and we then prepared to depart for the shelter of our bungalow, which we began already to wish for. Everything was, therefore, huddled into the baskets with very little ceremony ; the baskets bundled into the

boat, the dogs impatiently scrambling in altogether, yelping and floundering in the water: the painter was then cast loose from the stem of a cocoanut-tree to which our vessel had been moored; and, jumping aboard ourselves, we pushed off from the shore.

Our boat was one of the flat-bottomed class in general use upon the lake; which, abounding in shoals and shallows, requires vessels of small draught for its difficult and sometimes dangerous navigation. It was cutter-rigged, with a heavy mast and booms, a very large fore-and-aft mainsail, and a large mizensail. It was, in fact, overrigged and topheavy, not having sufficient hold of the water to counterbalance the strain aloft; but it being almost a dead calm, we had every stitch of canvass spread, in hopes to catch the faint breeze that scarcely rippled the smooth surface of the lake.

We did accordingly catch it, and with a vengeance; for suddenly the sky was overcast with thick portentous clouds. The wind blew in fierce and hollow gusts that sent us spinning through the water, gunwale under; while the tops of incipient billows began to curl aloft on the bosom of the lake, lately as calm and tranquil as a treacherous smile on the features of my friend Slimley.

"'Tis the break-up of the monsoon, sure enough," said Croker, whose features assumed a livid paleness, as a tremendous flash of lightning burst from an angry cloud overhead; while heaven's dread artillery poured forth a continuous series of frightful explosions, that seemed to shake the earth to its very centre.

"Run up, Mustapha!" I shouted, as I held a firm grasp of the tiller, "and clear that topsail halyard; for we must strike our skyscrapers, or we shall soon go to Davy Jones's locker."

The boy bounded up with alacrity, clinging like a mountain-cat to our simple rigging; and he was speedily seated astride on the cross-trees, taking in the topsail.

"I wonder," said Croker, "if the lake is deep hereabouts, for by Jupiter, I can't swim a stroke; but as I'm a tall fellow, I may have some chance of keeping my chin above water, if I can only touch the bottom with my toes."

He had scarcely uttered the words, when a hurricane blast struck us with such fury, that we upset in an instant; and all were engulfed in the boiling flood, which now raged with unmitigated strife, as if lashed into endless commotion by all the winds of heaven.

But I speedily regained the surface, and eagerly grappled with the first object that met my hand. This was a conglomeration of mast, booms, and sails, which had fortunately been blown all together right out of the boat, and floated buoyantly upon the billowy surface of the lake. The mast had fallen across the booms; and all three being connected together by the sails and rigging, a species of raft was thus formed, which now alone stood between us and destruction.

To my delight, as I grappled one end of the mast, I saw Croker holding on firmly at the other. Our boat was gone to the bottom, where I took it for granted that poor Mustapha was also lodged; as my repeated calls on his name met with no other response than the steady and tremendous howling of the wind. The dogs were all scattered about, swimming for bare life, and yelping piteously. I

gave two or three of them shelter on our raft; but the remainder soon after disappeared in the deepening gloom and thundering noise of the tempest.

It was pitch-dark; but a lurid gleam occasionally swept over the waste of waters, imparting to every object a sickly and mysterious tinge; while, as I looked on my fellow-sufferer, now within a few yards of me, methought the hue of death was already impressed upon his features.

"Hollo! Croker," I exclaimed in a cheerful voice, "how goes it, old fellow?"

"By Jupiter, Percy," he replied, "that was a blast! I wonder if we shall ever get out of this infernal mess."

"To be sure we shall," I said. "Some boat or other will pick us up, when the first fury of the gale is past."

"But when will that be?" demanded Croker. "You don't know these storms as well as I do, Percy. They sometimes last for three or four days; sometimes for a whole week, as bad, ay, and worse than the present; so that no boat will venture to cross the lake for some time to come."

"That's a bad look out," I returned; "but let us hope for the best, and never say die till we're kilt."

"Whatever you do," said Croker, "don't let go your hold on that end of the mast; for if you do, I must sink."

"Fear not, old fellow, I said; "though I know I could easily swim to shore, I'll never do so at your expense."

It was indeed a very frail and uncertain bulwark that now stood between us and our fate; for the mast lay across the booms in so slippery a manner, that the slightest extra motion at either end, to which Croker and I clung with tenacious death-grasp, would destroy the balance on which our lives depended. Self-preservation, therefore, kept us very quiet and watchful of our equilibrium; and I had frequently even to scold the poor dogs for endangering it, when, in their solicitude, they would creep from the centre of the raft, and lick our hands in token of affection.

Meanwhile, the tempest was raging with ungovernable fury. It seemed like the "crack of doom;" and I almost expected that every instant the solid globe, unable to sustain the battling of the elements, would split into millions of fragments, and all fly off into interminable space. The lightning flashed incessantly, rending the massy curtains of the clouds with streaks of unimaginable brilliancy; while the awful peals of thunder, reverberating through the hollow concave, startled the very soul with their unspeakable grandeur.

Anon, the flood-gates of heaven were let loose, and the rain descended, not in torrents, but in water-spouts; masses of the angry fluid, beating us down with irresistible fury; as if determined to dispute the honour of drowning us, with the world of waters in which we were already engulfed, and struggling for existence. It was awful to witness the contest that seemed to rage between two such dissimilar bodies of the same element: the rain one moment beating down the waves into something like a sullen calm, and the next, the waves dashing upwards their saucy heads, as if in bold defiance;

while, ever and anon, a furious blast would come skirling along, and scatter the impotent combatants in showers of vapoury mist along the agitated surface.

"By Jupiter! this is a regular forlorn hope," sighed poor Croker. "I have never led one myself, but you have, Percy, and can tell us if there be any difference."

"So much," I replied, "that I would rather lead fifty than endure this agonizing life in death for another day. In a storming party, Croker, you have the certainty of speedy conquest, or sudden death: the hope of glory, the excitement, the emulation, the actual frenzy of the fight; with the shouts of admiration that urge you on, and crown you on the summit of victory. But this is dying like a dog; suffering whole hours and days under the infliction of every physical evil, while the mind itself is chilled, cowed, and beaten down with despair."

"That's it," returned Croker; "I've stood face to face, both barrels empty, with a tiger in the jungle; and I never had the feeling of dread that is now coming over me."

I endeavoured to laugh Croker out of his panic; and, strange to say, there was a momentary lull in the tempest, as if the very elements were startled at the ghastly merriment of a perishing wretch like me. But it soon came on again, with tenfold fury; the constant howling of the wind surpassing everything of which we have any knowledge or conception, except it be the continuous roaring of ten thousand lions: and though, occasionally, a pale glimmer would steal over the leaden hue of the heavens, a feeble indication of the still existing sun, it would speedily disappear, and all again resume the sable tint of death. Our long immersion in the water had benumbed our limbs, the extremities of which were seized with frequent cramps; our half-naked bodies were shivering with cold; our entrails torn with the pangs of hunger; and our throats parched with a raging thirst (Pulicat being a salt-water lake), which it was useless to endeavour to assuage by holding our mouths open to receive the rain-drops, as they fell thick and heavy upon us and around us.

But vain are the efforts of language to describe the breaking up of the Indian monsoon, a periodical phenomenon that must be seen and felt to be thoroughly understood. With a mortifying consciousness of my own feeble powers, I retire from the hopeless task, and beg the reader to imagine that for two whole days and nights we were thus exposed to the unmitigated fury of the tempest; drenched, cold, shivering, hungry, and hopeless. During that period not a sail had appeared in sight; and nothing had responded to our frequent cries and shouts, but the wild shrieking of a sea-gull equally helpless as ourselves.

The morning of the third day, which rose gloomy and tempestuous like the preceding, found us dreadfully stiff, benumbed and exhausted; especially poor Croker, whose strength had been much reduced by a long attack of jungle fever. He frequently slipped from his hold, which with difficulty he recovered again, and was evidently becoming weaker at every effort. At last, he said, in a tremulous voice:—

"By Jupiter! Percy, there's no use in it. I'm as weak as water,

and my hands have lost their grip entirely. You must cut and run, Percy. Swim for your life, my boy, and leave me to my fate.

"No!" I said, "Croker, I'll never desert you while there's a spark of life in your body. Besides, to tell God's truth, I don't think I have strength enough left to swim ashore now."

"Percy," said my poor friend, as he turned his now feeble gaze upon me. "You're are a great book fellow, Percy, and have read a thousand things that I never even dreamt of. What do you think the next world is like?"

"Who can tell?" I replied, "nobody has ever returned to describe it; and we have really nothing to depend upon, on that point at least, but imaginary pictures drawn by poets, philosophers, and religious enthusiasts."

"Oh, murder!" exclaimed Croker, "is that all? Then it's a blue look-out, Percy."

"But, instead of a fanciful description of the other world," I said, "we have the consolations of religion, the promise of salvation, and the innate and unquenchable conviction of the justice and mercy of the Creator, who will reward or punish us according to our works."

"Ay," said Croker, "that's my hope after all: for I have done as much good and as little harm as I could in this world, unless shooting tigers and wild boars be a crime; and I always observed the ten commandments. I never drew a graven image in my life, Percy; and I never could make even pot-hooks and hangers like anything in this world, or the world above. I never committed a robbery or a murder, Percy, except stealing apples at school, and shooting Pindarries in the way of business. I never bore false witness on a court-martial; or otherwise and never coveted any man's wife but Old Nick's, and he was no neighbour of mine. I honour my father and mother, Percy, and have sent them several tiger-skins, besides China crape shawls and strings of carnelians to my sisters. I never coveted any one's goods, except once an American rifle—such a beauty, Percy; stock and barrel all the same piece of iron, but still only feather-weight, it was so nicely balanced. Adultery, I believe, means manslaughter, or bigamy, and I don't rightly understand which; but thank goodness, I never committed either of them to my knowledge. As for keeping holy the Sabbath," said the poor penitent, "I'm afraid I must plead guilty, and throw myself on the mercy of the court; but not to the full extent of the crime charged: for I never had sons and daughters to break the Sabbath, unless you count three or four little whitey-brown pagans, that haven't a soul to be saved amongst the whole lot. As for men-servants and maid-servants, there are no such things in India, Percy, they're all boys and finished women in this country; and I'll engage that my Irish mastiff, Morgan Rattler, would soon settle the hash of any stranger that ventured within my gates: that means, I suppose, the milk hedge of my compound, which had a great many gates, as you well know, Percy. In everything else, Percy, I've done my duty like a man, and all the rest is balderdash—"

With this favourite and comprehensive term on his lips, poor Croker let go his hold, and went guggling to the bottom.

Soon after the final disappearance of my lamented friend, I made an

attempt to swim ashore; but I found it vain to struggle with the tempest, in the exhausted state of my physical powers. I therefore, returned to the mast, booms, and sails, which were now lumped together in a way that offered something in the shape of a resting place. Having succeeded to the sole inheritance of this last asylum, I threw myself down upon it, with my body half immersed in water; while my spaniel, Dash, the only dog now left, crouched down by my side, occasionally licking my hands and face, and looking dolefully upwards, as the tempest beat against his shivering sides.

In this helpless position, recommending my soul to the mercy of its divine Author, I patiently await the stroke of death. It came, at length, as I imagined; for a period of tranquillity succeeded the hungry gnawing which had so long disturbed me, and closing my eyes, I slept, as I supposed, to awake in eternity.

CHAPTER LXV.

A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN.

BUT I was mistaken: the end was not yet, and further scenes and trials lay before me.

I must have been insensible for several hours; and when at length I came to my recollection, and contrasted the scene of complicated horrors I had last witnessed, with the perfectly tranquil state in which I now was, I could only come to one conclusion—that my spirit had winged its flight from the troubled scenes of earthly existence, and was now at last in the regions of the blest.

Oh! what rapture filled my bosom at the thought of my beatitude! What unspeakable ecstasy thrilled through my veins, and vibrated in my heart of hearts; to find that I was at length released from the heavy load of early corruption, and that yet my spirit was free from those unendurable and never-ending pangs to which poor humanity is doomed for the few fleeting, transitory, momentary frailties of its mortal state! What delight to be within the very precincts of heaven—in the awful presence, perhaps, of the Deity himself! To be summoned to add my feeble voice to the universal hymn of praise resounding eternally from the angelic choir! To be called upon in my turn (for the mortal soldier still prevailed in my breast) to join the heavenly host of guardian seraphim, who, night and day, or rather throughout the one glorious and eternal sunshine, keep watch and ward around the throne of ineffable brightness, before which even the angelic gaze falls abashed in awe and wonder!

And then, again, what bliss did I not anticipate from beholding once more amidst the heavenly host, purified from every mortal stain, those dear beings with whom my affections had been closely linked in a prior state of existence! To blend my spirit with theirs in that seraphic communion, the unspeakable reward of the good and just! To fly with them over illimitable space, in speechless admiration of the power of God, evinced in the countless worlds of his boundless creation; and to watch and guard, if so permitted, the erring foot

steps of those dear beings who still lingered upon earth! Nor with less joy did I look forward to a mutual recognition, and a happy meeting with those poets, sages, legislators, patriots, and warriors of antiquity, who might be deemed worthy of admission into paradise, without reference to age or clime: those "Christians before Christianity," in short, who like Socrates had given, in the purity of their lives and the unerring wisdom of their precepts, certain indications of the divine spirit that inspired them. To mingle on an equal footing with these immortal luminaries, and to listen to their seraphic discourse, filled my bosom with anticipations of insupportable joy; till, overwhelmed, as it were, by the bright ecstatic vision, my senses wandered, and I slept again.

From this ethereal doze—and I now found that even the angels sleep—I was soon after awakened by a delightful strain of simple melody that pervaded the place in which I lay; so soft, so delicate, so pathetic, that my soul was touched, tears gushed from my eyes, and I mentally ejaculated, "This sure, is heaven! Nothing earthly can resemble this!"

And yet, every object around me bore so close a resemblance to things familiar to me in the other world, that I was quite amazed at the trifling change which had occurred in the transition. I was lying in a delightfully soft bed, the sheets and curtains of which were white as the driven snow, while the sun was shining brightly through an open casement, and fell upon chairs, tables, and other well-known objects, of highly-polished teak and blackwood. A mahogany embroidery-frame stood by the casement—and near it sat an angel!

An angel! Yes, there could be no question about that, at least: she was so young, so lovely, so perfect in form and feature, and so redolent of ethereal bliss, that my doubts, if any I had, all vanished, and I listened with intense delight to the sweetly plaintive notes she was drawing from a tiny flageolet, or serenata,—the music which had first struck my ravished ears when I awoke from all the gross delusions of my earthly nature in a world of pure celestial spirits.

I spoke not, I moved not, I scarcely breathed, lest my guardian angel, as I took the form to be, should vanish into air and leave me once more alone and desolate. But a few minutes only had elapsed when, the spirit moving its head, our eyes encountered. With a sudden spring, half joyful, half terrified, she threw away the flageolet, clapped her hands, and ran out of the apartment, uttering something or other which I could not comprehend, in Dutch.

Yes, Dutch it certainly was—Low Dutch! In that, at least, I could not be mistaken; and exceedingly mortified I felt on finding so vile a language spoken in heaven. A terrible suspicion, however, crossed my mind, and I asked myself, "Can it be possible that I am still upon earth, in that horrid land of frogs, and vrows, and agues?" But in my fancied wisdom, I exclaimed, "There is an infallible test,—the teeth! the teeth!"

The vision had now returned, and approached my bedside with noiseless footsteps. I immediately exclaimed, in French:—

"Sweet angel! let me look at your teeth!"

"*Voilà!*" she replied, in the same language, "behold!" and drawing back her lips, she displayed two perfect rows of the purest and most pearly texture.

"That settles the point," I said to myself; "no earthly Dutch-woman ever had such a mouthful of ivory as that. An angel, of course, she must be; purified from all the dross of her earthly nature."

At that moment, another spirit, of matronly appearance, bearing a singular likeness to the first, entered the apartment; and approaching the bed, the younger one said, in French, "His mind still wanders, mamma: the first words he uttered were, that I should show him my teeth."

The matronly angel smiled benignantly; then retiring for a moment, she returned with a salver in her hand, on which stood a china basin that emitted a savoury odour, while a light curling vapour ascended from its brim.

Taking a spoon, that looked like earthly silver, she fed me from the contents of the basin; which seemed to me so like delicious soup, that I said to myself, as if thinking aloud, "'Tis strange that everything should be so like the world I have left; and still more singular that I should retain my earthly appetite to a degree which this ambrosia cannot satisfy."

A smile of intelligence passed between the two spirits; the younger one glided from the apartment, and soon returned with another salver, bearing a china plate with a leg and wing of a chicken, to all appearance; and a wine-glass of amber-coloured fluid, which on tasting I found to resemble Madeira. These good things having despatched, I felt satisfied, consoled, as it were in the regions of the stomach; and silent smiles of mutual gratification were exchanged between me and my celestial attendants.

My mind, as I thought, was perfectly collected at the time; and yet I could not recollect that I had ever heard enumerated amongst the enjoyments of heaven, and the beatitudes of the blest, the luxury of lying in bed all day, and being fed by ministering angels with ambrosia resembling *soupe à la Julienne*. But I argued the matter in this way: I was either dead or alive, that was certain: if dead, how could I possibly be subject to the gross appetites of material existence? And if alive, how could I be ministered unto by angels, as they evidently were? My mind was sadly perplexed by the gravity of this dilemma; between the horns of which, laying my head back upon my pillow, my eyes closed, my thoughts became confused, a deep slumber usurped all my faculties.

On awaking, I again heard the music of the evening before. My guardian angel was at her post; but her strain was now more cheerful and more elaborate, displaying a perfection of skill that brought out the whole powers of the instrument; while, as the divisions followed each other in a rapid series of *ad libitum* passages, the whole were embellished with trills, graces, and appoggiaturas, that made me fancy I was listening to a concert of the most delightful singing-birds that ever were created in earth or heaven.

It seemed to be morning, for the light was chaste and silvery; the air was fresh, and the perfume of a thousand flowers pervaded the

apartment. I felt wonderfully renovated by the balmy breath of early day, and entirely free from that sultry oppressiveness that was wont to weigh down my spirits when clogged with all my fleshly incumbrances. My mind was in a delirium of joy; and, though I felt excessively weak in my bodily functions, yet I knew that, being just born into a new state of existence, I could as yet be nothing more than a little child, for "of such is the kingdom of heaven!"

At the conclusion of these reveries, my eyes met those of my guardian angel, radiant with joy, and happiness, and love.

As usual, when the bright spirit saw that I was awake, she vanished from the apartment, but soon returned with her elderly companion, both laden with the morning refection, which bore so strong a resemblance to an earthly breakfast that, after I had partaken of it very heartily, I began to suspect that my vision was not of so celestial a nature as I at first supposed. My thoughts, however, still wandered, my mental and physical powers being those of an infant; my body was exceedingly weak, my head confused, and I sank again into a long and refreshing slumber.

But, not to tire the patience of the reader, it will suffice to say, that three days more of this kind, judicious treatment effectually brought me to my senses; the scales fell from my eyes, and I saw everything in its real state: a discovery which at first gave me infinite pain and vexation, though the continued presence of my angelic mortal attendants soon reconciled me to the change.

From them I learned that I owed my preservation to Mynheer Van Hogendorp, a Dutch gentleman of Pulicat, in whose house I now lay. After the fury of the tempest had abated, he was fortunately returning in a market boat from a village on the opposite shores of the lake, when he discovered me lying upon the raft which Providence had so kindly formed for my preservation. A dog was found lying across my apparently dead body, as if to keep it warm; and being in the last stage of existence, with a faint yelp he yielded up his life and charge together. Finding that the vital spark was not yet extinct, Van Hogendorp had the charity to bring me to his house; where, confiding me to the care of his wife and daughter, to their gentle and skilful attentions I owe my almost miraculous rescue from the tomb.

In a few days more, Elise, for so my guardian angel was called, and Madame Hogendorp, her mother, a lady of French extraction from Pondicherry, finding that I was now so much better, were less frequent in their visits to my bedside. The further progress of my cure was confided to two careful and attentive domestics, under whose skilful management I was soon enabled to leave my bed, and walk about a little; being treated every now and then, with a glimpse of Elise, as she looked in smilingly, to see how I was getting on.

But I pined for that glorious apparition which had first struck my sight, on awaking from my trance; and I soon left my apartment, to mingle with the family, partaking of their meals with all the easy familiarity of a son and a brother; thus, in the delicious cool of the evening, seated in the garden, between the mother and daughter,

Mynheer smoking his meerschaum at a little distance, I enjoyed the melody of Elise's flageolet, and the simple but edifying conversation of her parents.

With pain, however, I saw that my worthy Dutch preserver was rather straitened in his circumstances; for he had little or nothing to support his family but the pension allowed by the Company to all the surviving descendants of those early settlers who founded this once flourishing colony. I, therefore, proposed to Mynheer Van Hogendorp, that he should receive me as a boarder in his house, and accept of the first month's stipend in advance, which latter stipulation he only agreed to after much solicitation on my part.

Having procured a messenger for Bentinck Bungalow, I ordered my dubash to come over to Pulicat, with all the luggage, as speedily as possible; and he soon after arrived, with a boat-load, which made the simple inhabitants of this decayed settlement look upon me as a person of some consequence. Mooto Kistna, I thought, would have gone out of his wits with joy, when he saw me thus like one restored from the dead; but he did not evince much sorrow for the loss of Croker. This was not for want of proper feeling, of which he had a reasonable share; but the Hindoos do not grieve as we do for the dead, whom they rather look upon as fortunate in being provided for, and freed from the cares and anxieties of this difficult world. The custom of cremation, also, by removing from their eyes all visible mementos of departed relatives and friends, materially tends to this apparent want of sensibility.

Mooto Kistna brought me a packet of letters from friends in various parts of India, including one which had arrived the day before, from Colonel Gordon, brigade major of king's troops, with whom, as a matter of course, I had left my address on coming to Pulicat. This snuffy old functionary informed me, in his cold, hard, official style, that the China ships were now in the offing, and that I must be prepared to embark, the very moment I received the order to do so.

This was the the first startling summons to dissipate the dream in which I was indulging; and it brought me to book, rather abruptly, as to my future plans and prospects: but, wearied and worried with the speculation, I crushed the unwelcome missive in my fingers, threw it into a corner, and hurried off to keep an appointment with Elise.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE MAID OF THE LAKE.

It was that delightful interval between noon and night, which succeeds the fervour of the Indian day; when labour, "with its weary task foredone," hies home to its humble cot and welcome repose; when the evening breeze rustles among the broad-leaved plantains, wafting the perfume of the night flowers upon the sluggish air; and the glimmering fire-fly begins to show his tiny lamp amidst the deep shadow of the mango, flitting and sparkling through its mountain of

dense foliage. It was at this sweet hour, which the Indian sojourner alone can appreciate, that Elise and I strolled out to enjoy the fresco, accompanied by her ayah, and a little playful spaniel that skipped and bounded before her and ever and anon returned, wagging his tail and looking up into her beautiful features with his intelligent eyes, as if admiring her loveliness or seeking at her hand the reward of his humble but zealous services.

Nothing could be more in unison with the peaceful serenity of the hour, than the singularly dreamy aspect of this ancient settlement. The town of Pulicat had once been extensive and populous; lying along the southern shores of the lake, and surrounded on three sides by a belt of mazy jungle, which was fast disappearing before the progress of arts, commerce, and manufactures, those deadly enemies of pastoral life and sylvan solitudes. But the superior energy and enterprise of the English laid the foundation of Dutch ruin both at home and abroad: the reverses of the mother country were speedily felt at Pulicat; its commerce and manufactures declined, its wealth decayed, and its inhabitants fled in numbers to scenes of greater promise; while those who preferred remaining by the tombs of their ancestors, dwindled perceptibly into scarcely animate memorials of the past.

The jungle, also, as if conscious of its enemies' decay, had long been asserting its ancient rights, and was now, in its turn, taking possession of the empty tenements of the foe; a fine young cocoanut-tree pushing its proud head through a tiled roof in one place, and the broad-leaved peepul forcing its way through a solid wall in another; while lizards, snakes, scorpions, centipedes, and jackalls crawled or ran about, and peeped through the windows, in mockery, as it were, of the short-lived vanities of the human race.

The mango, the tamarind, the bamboo, the aloe, the cactus, and a thousand other trees, shrubs, and inferior vegetables springing thus spontaneously, in all directions, from the fruitful soil, usurped not only the silent mansions of the departed, but intruded even through every chink and crevice of the still occupied houses, as if impatient of the lingering presence of their lethargic inhabitants. There was thus an intermingling of animal and vegetable life and death that was affecting in a high degree, seeming to indicate the approaching end of all; when the last man, gazing around upon the growing wilderness, finally sinks, helpless and almost hopeless, into the bosom of his parent earth.

But it was not alone in the jungle that the rapid vegetation of the East evinced itself; the very streets of Pulicat were overgrown with thick grass, through which a few straggling pathways seemed to maintain their positions with difficulty against the herbal encroachments which threatened before long to extinguish them altogether. The few houses that were still occupied, were so completely embowered in luxuriant vegetation, as to be nearly hidden from the gaze of the traveller; while their idle inhabitants lingered on upon the company's allowance, sufficient for their simple wants, and precluding the necessity of personal exertion on their parts.

Thus secluded from the world, and having little or no communication with the busy haunts of man, Pulicat might well be called, in

the figurative language of the East, "the city of the silent;" that portion of the melancholy precinct, expressly so termed, exhibiting a degree of repose scarcely more solemn or affecting than the rest.

This ancient receptacle of the dead, which comprised many tombstones one hundred and sixty years old, was situated immediately on the shore of the lake, and overlooked its various windings and mazy woodlands to a vast extent. Here seated with Elise upon a soft, mossy mound of earth, which haply covered the bones of some inglorious Van Tromp, I listened delighted, like another Sterne, to this modern Maria, as on her pretty little pipe she warbled her native wood-notes wild; gazing in her eyes, and drinking deep draughts of love from a fount the most artless and innocent that ever inflamed the breast of man.

Elise was a child of nature, in the fullest sense of the term. She had never been out of Pulicat, except on a short visit or two to Madras; and she knew no one but her parents and some half-dozen old residents, as simple and secluded as themselves. Of the great world beyond the belt of jungle that enfolded her in its sylvan embrace, she knew absolutely nothing, either from oral tradition, or literary communication, her acquaintance even with books being of the most limited nature. The wonder, therefore, and delight with which she listened to my various recitals and descriptions of scenes, events, and personages, of which, even in dreams, she had never conceived any idea, may well be imagined. She laughed, admired, wept, or frowned, as corresponding emotions were excited in her breast by the interest of the narrative which called them forth; and her eloquent eyes amply repaid me for the pleasure I imparted: while, on my side, the feeling I entertained of her helpless innocence and confiding simplicity, hallowed in my breast the sentiment she inspired, and gave it all the enduring brightness of a pure and holy flame.

Thus, many days were passed in sweet, yet dangerous communication with the gentle unsophisticated being whose tender cares had been mainly instrumental in recalling me to life. In her dear society I had no other wants or wishes; while, on her part, my presence alone seemed to fill her cup of joy to the brim. This was natural: I was, as it were, a waif of humanity cast at her feet by the waters of that lake which bounded the horizon of her humble existence; and in me, her cares had introduced a new being upon the earth. For my part, *blasé* from a long intercourse with the great world, where I had run the gauntlet of the human affections, and found nothing but disappointment in the chase, I was like the thirsty traveller when he discovers the pearly fountain in the desert, or the needy one, when he finds the priceless gem. Of all our themes of conversation, war, and its attendant horrors, seemed to yield her the most unqualified amazement and disgust; for, accustomed all her life to nothing but an interchange of kind offices with her peaceful and humble friends and neighbours, she had not the remotest idea of the savage scenes which, to vary our discourse, I occasionally related to her. Like Desdemona,—

"She swore 'twas strange—'twas passing strange!
 'Twas pitiful—'twas wondrous pitiful!"

Like the same unhappy lady, alas ! she also,—

“ Lov’d me for the dangers I had pass’d,
And I lov’d her that she did pity them.”

But the reader is not to imagine that we were entirely devoid of social intercourse even in this woodland solitude; so remote from the ordinary haunts and busy hum of men, that it might well be likened to one of those fabulous cities of Eastern romance, whose inhabitants have been laid asleep for centuries by the potent touch of the magician’s wand.

Let me introduce him, therefore, to Mynheer Canterfischer, fiscal, or magistrate, of Pulicat, when time was; a venerable, free-hearted old fellow, with an amiable wife and daughter. The next in dignity was my worthy host, Mynheer Van Hogendorp; the last descendant of a highly distinguished family in the mother country, and a perfect gentleman in every respect. Then there were Monsieur and Madame Heri; the former captain of a privateer, who had realized a small income by his cruises in the Indian seas; his wife being the daughter of a former governor of Pulicat, long since gathered to his fathers. Mr. Leslie, the master attendant, comes next: a broad-set, strong-built fellow, who had been boatswain of a man-of-war, and was now, in his old age, planted, with a small salary, at Pulicat; his especial duties being to look through his telescope at the flag-staff, to see that no one purloined the union jack; and to register by guess the number of market-boats that passed daily on their way to Madras. We had also two or three other Dutch families, of minor consequence; and Dr. McIntire, a broad Scotchman, who had medical charge of the settlement, and enjoyed a moderate salary for administering the contents of his medicine chest, gratis, to the inhabitants.

These worthy individuals constituted our society; and a subscription ball got up in honour of my arrival, under the direction of Mr. Leslie’s son, who played the fiddle, and exercised the treble functions of orchestra, ballet-master, and master of the ceremonies, served to give an air of gaiety to Pulicat to which it had long been a stranger.

Oh! had the gentle reader but witnessed our morning visits; our political, literary, and philosophical discussions; our evening parties of tea, long whist, and *eau sucrée*; our musical meetings, with instrumental performances by flute, violin, and flageolet, and vocal duets, trios, and Dutch choruses, where every one sang his own tune independent of his neighbour;—had he but shared in our quadrilles and country dances; and strolled with Elise and me amidst embowering shades impervious to the noon-day sun, on grassy slopes where the simple Hindoo, with his unsophisticated loom, wove those gorgeous handkerchiefs which once were famed throughout Europe; and down by the pebbly beach of the lake, to witness the gambols of the jumping fish, or watch the placid flowing of the tide rolling its tiny billows on the wrinkled shore—he would at once conclude that I was the happiest of human beings, and would pity me—ah! how he would pity me when this little gleam of sunshine had also vanished, and like the baseless fabric of a vision,—

“ Left not a wrack behind.”

It is, I believe, the lot of our earthly pilgrimage never to feel such perfect enjoyment, when pleasure is within our reach, as we suffer misery from its loss. The truth of this I was now soon to experience.

The tappall came in one morning when I was sitting with some visitors in Madame Hogendorp's drawing-room, and my boding heart sank within me as an official letter was placed in my hand. With a look of prophetic sadness, I broke the seal, and found it was an order to proceed forthwith on board the *Streatham* Indiaman, one of the homeward-bound China fleet, then lying in Madras Roads.

My agitation was too apparent to be overlooked, and I was forced to reveal its cause. A general outcry of sorrow arose at the announcement; poor Elise turned deadly pale, tears gushed from her eyes, and she was forced to retire. Her mother was scarcely in a better plight, for she knew how seriously her daughter's happiness was compromised: in short, all my friends bewailed my approaching loss as a universal calamity.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE OLD SEA-DOG.

BUT my two most staunch supporters on this melancholy occasion were Leslie and McIntire. These two worthy fellows had been daily and constant visitors of mine ever since my convalescence; dropping in regularly at half-past twelve every day, when they were sure to find some creature-comfort in my private apartment, as cold ham, Bengal-hump, tongue and capon, &c., with a couple of bottles of cognac; and never leaving me till five, the family dinner-hour. Their conversation, it is true, was not very instructive, but it was always amusing; especially when they began to quarrel, which generally took place towards the conclusion of the second bottle.

In the present critical state of affairs these trusty friends were both loud and vehement in their reprobation of so harsh a mode of proceeding against "a gentleman and an officer," as Leslie remarked while we adjourned to our ordinary place of consultation.

"A gentleman and an officer, sink my heart! do you see?" continued Leslie, sticking his fork into a beautiful Westphalia, and helping himself to a wedge of the same; "a gentleman and an officer, who has shed his blood for his country and crown, sink my heart! and skivered those Pindarries, and other black rascals, like so many sparrows."

"Hech, sirs!" sighed the Doctor, pouring out a tumbler of consolation from the brandy bottle: "Hech, sirs! but 'tis unco fashious to be sae stric' in a matter like the present, where the happiness or meesery of twa desarving eendividoals—"

"Blood and thunder!" cried Leslie, snatching the bottle from the Doctor, and taking what he called a thimbleful; viz., three parts of

a tumbler, "neat as imported." "Blood and thunder, man! is that all you can say in your snivelling Scotch fashion, for one of the bravest young fellows in the service, and one of the loveliest angels, sink my heart! that ever swung in a sailor's hammock—"

"Hoot awa, mon!" cried the Doctor, interrupting him. "Let me tell ye, Meester Leslie, that oor sneeveling Scotch fashion, as ye ca't, is not to be pit down by ony sic blustering bletherum-skite as ye are, mon—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted Leslie, winking at me, as he tossed off another bumper. "Sink my heart! I knew I'd soon rouse his Scotch blood to boiling heat. Go it now, Doctor; I've got the steam up for you, sink my heart!"

"Weel, then," said the Doctor, wetting his whistle ere he spoke; "my opeenion is jest this—let oor friend Blake, first and foremost, try the effec' of a mollifying epeistle to the commander-in-chief, praying for twa months' leave, on urgent preevate affairs; and that will jest gie us time to look aboot us a wee."

"Good, again!" sputtered Leslie, with his mouth full of capon. "Doctor, sink my heart! you're a long-headed fellow. Here's to you, my boy!"

And both clashed their full tumblers together, as if they would shiver them to atoms.

"But what if he refuses?" I asked.

"Ay, what if he refuses?" repeated Leslie: "sink my heart! that's the point."

"In sic a case as that," said the Doctor, draining off his tumbler, and smacking his lips under the operation; "in sic a case as that, noo, could ye na get yerself arrested for a sma' debt, mon?"

"Bravo!" cried Leslie.

"An jest gang into quod," continued the Doctor, "for a day or twa, till we can bail ye oot, mon."

"Bravissimo!" roared Leslie, finishing the first bottle. "Sink my heart! I'll be one of his bail. I'm a housekeeper and a burgess of Pulicat; and I pay scot and lot, and parish taxes, to the amount of sixpence halfpenny per annum."

"An by that time, ye ken," continued the Doctor, as he uncorked the second bottle, "the ships will have sailed awa, and ye'll be safe for a bonny twa months, at least, mon."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Leslie, "Give us your fist, my hearty old cock. Sink my heart! but you're a brick, and no mistake."

Here they grasped each other by the hand, with a vehemence that shook the whole building. But I damped their zeal, by decidedly objecting to the Doctor's expedient.

"I owe nothing in the world," I said; "and getting up a sham debt for such a purpose might be thrown in my teeth, as unofficer-like."

"Sink my heart!" cried Leslie, "that's well thought on. I'm an officer myself—that is, a warrant-officer—sink my heart! and I have a proper feeling for the honour of the service."

"Weel then," said the doctor, "if that cock winna fight, and we

canna hit upon ony ither expedient, I suld na mind gieing ye a sick certificate, mon."

"Bravo! again," cried Leslie, with a choking gulp of brandy-and-water—"Sink my heart! the water is always bad in this house;—it weakens every think it touches—hand me the bottle, McIntire."

"Ye dinna look sae weel," continued the doctor, first helping himself, "but that ane may stretch a point in ye'r favour."

"To be sure, he doesn't," chimed in Leslie. "He's very red in the face, and sink my heart, but I think he's dropsical!"

"Nae, nae," said McIntire, "ye're oot there, mon; but there's a white and a yalla about his een, as ae body may ken that spiers intul 'em; which eendicate a vara beelious state of the seestem."

"That's it, by the Lord!" cried Leslie. "Blood and thunder! didn't I tell you so?"

"Hoot! toot!" replied McIntire; "ye said dropseecal, mon."

"Well, isn't it all the same?" shouted Leslie, who had now made a deep inroad into the second bottle. "Bilious and dropsical—sink my heart!—don't they both rise from the what do you call 'em state of the system?"

"Hoot awa, mon, nae sic a thing;" returned McIntire, still further diminishing the contents of No. 2. "They rise from different causes a'thegither. Let me explain to ye, Meester Leslie——"

"I want no explanations, sink my heart!" cried Leslie, who was now getting pugnacious. "Explanations are always the last shift of a fellow that won't fight, sink my heart!"

"An he that winna hearken tul explanations," retorted the doctor, "is leetle better nor ane o' the brute creation."

"What's that you say?" cried Leslie, seizing the bottle, as if about to fling it at his adversary's head; but, pouring its last contents into his tumbler, he drank it off, exclaiming,—

"Here's confusion to you, sink my heart! for a Scotch quack!"

"And to yersel'," retorted the doctor, snatching back the bottle, and taking a last drain, "for an eegnorant sea-going monster!"

Both worthies now staggered out of the room, and out of the house, in a paroxysm of mutual wrath and hostility; but, finding they could neither of them walk home singly, they locked arms, and toddled off together to their respective quarters.

Little as I hoped for from the doctor's plan, still I followed it, when I looked at the tearful eyes and changing hue of poor Elise's delicate complexion; and applied for two months' leave, on most urgent private business: but my application was rejected point-blank. I then, as a *dernier ressort*, sent in McIntire's sick-certificate; and for a couple of days had no answer, from which I began to hope it was taking effect.

On the third morning, I was practising with the *mukdurs*, the steel bow, and other Oriental gymnastics, on the green before our door, with young Leslie and two or three of my Dutch friends, when McIntire approached, arm-in-arm with a stranger, whom he introduced as his excellent friend Dr. McNab.

This was a pleasant, smiling, soft-looking person; who, addressing himself to me, spoke of the invigorating nature of my exercise, and

asked a number of questions about the effects it produced on my health, strength, and appetite.

"Nothing could possibly be better," I replied. "The Oriental gymnastics are the best ever invented for improving and preserving all the physical functions."

"And to judge from your appearance, sir," said he, "I should take the air of Pulicat to be particularly salubrious."

"It agrees remarkably well with me," I replied; "for I never was better in all my life."

The stranger now took a polite and friendly leave, and walked off with his friend McIntire. The latter, poor fellow, whether suffering from bowel-complaint or an overdose of brandy, had greatly amused me by making the most horrible wry faces during our short colloquy; in which, however, he did not utter a word.

Half an hour afterwards, he burst into Madame Hogendorp's drawing-room, foaming with rage, and exclaiming,—

"Deel tak it a' sir! Ye hae ruined me and yersel' too, by yer seelly conduc'."

"Hollo, doctor!" I replied, "what's the matter, man?"

"Matter enoo to mak a mon ban his ain faither and mither," cried the doctor, stamping about the room.

"But explain, my dear sir," I said. "I can listen to explanations better than Leslie."

"Did ye na see me makkin' faces at ye a' the time?" demanded poor McIntire.

"Certainly," I replied; "horrible faces."

"An' could ye na guess what it was aboot, mon?" he continued.

"Well," I replied, "I at first thought you had been taking an overdose of your own physic; and then it occurred to me that it might be spasmodic cholera."

"Spasmodic deevil, sir!" cried the doctor, foaming at the mouth.

"'Twas the physician-general to the forces, sir!"

"The physician-general!" I exclaimed. "What your excellent friend, Dr. McNab!"

"To the deevil I pitch sic freendship, sir!" cried McIntire. "He has suspended me for signing yon sick-certeeficate, like a gowk an a fule as I was."

"My dear doctor," I said, "I am truly sorry to hear it."

"Ye'll be unco mair for yersel', I'm thinking," returned the doctor, who was not to be conciliated. "Ye'll be sent ower the surf* noo, sir, wi a flea in yer lug; and sae gude bye to ye, sir."

"But stay, my dear fellow," I said, "and take a drop of brandy before you go."

"Brandy be d——; nae, nae, I dinna mean that exactly," said the poor doctor. "Gie's the bottle, mon; but, in fac', I'm in sic a swither, that deil tak my saul gif I ken ony mair either what I'm sayin' or doin'. Here's wussin' ye a pleasant voyage, mon," he continued, as I poured him out a tumbler; "for e'en go ye must the noo, in spite of the deevil."

* The familiar term at Madras for deportation from India.

"I'll have a fight for it first," I exclaimed, as I looked at my poor, trembling Elise.

"Sink my heart! that's right, my boy!" cried Leslie, bustling into the room, and seizing the bottle before it was quite empty. "That's right, my hero; I like your spirit, sink my heart!" here he smacked his lips, after a good swig of the same. "And may I be teetotally—hem—ahem. I beg pardon, ladies; I didn't see you before. But curse me, I say, if I don't back your tack. Let 'em come on now. Sink my heart! I'm ready for a dozen of 'em!"

"Whom do you mean?" I exclaimed.

"The police peons, to be sure," replied Leslie. "There's a posse of them coming up the street at the heels of the inspector."

"Close the doors!" I shouted; "and keep the rascals out."

But the doors were already in possession of the civil force; and the inspector, an old English sergeant, entered the drawing-room, followed by a dozen of his peons, with tulwars stuck in their girdles; while the ladies all fled screaming, and even the doctor slunk out, muttering to himself as he absconded:—

"Ma certie, this is unco shairp practice; but I ha nae peety for the puir seelly fule wha canna keep his ain coonsel."

Leslie, however, stood by me like a trump, and bared his huge wrists for the onslaught.

"What is the meaning of this infamous outrage?" I demanded of the inspector.

"'Tis no outrage, sir," replied the latter, in a firm but respectful tone. "We are come in the discharge of our duty, acting under the authority of government."

Here the inspector handed me a copy of his warrant, authorizing and directing him to seize the person of Lieutenant and Acting-Captain Blake, wheresoever he might be found; and to convey him on board the *Streatham* Indiaman, by main force, if necessary; in virtue of an Act of Parliament, which confers upon the Honourable East-India Company, in full possession, the power of deportation, to enable them to remove from India, "individuals whose conduct, or intentions, they might find, or suspect, to be dangerous."

This precious document, founded upon an Act which rivals anything that ever emanated from the Council of Ten, was signed "Frederick Slimley, Principal Secretary to Government."

"What!" I exclaimed, "is that the late resident at Ruttunpoor?"

"The same, sir," replied the inspector.

"Then, by Heavens!" I cried, "I'll not budge a foot on the warrant of such a scoundrel. 'Tis a palpable conspiracy, and I claim the rights of a British subject."

"That's all very well in England, sir," replied the inspector, "but our laws are more summary on this side of the Line."

He then ordered two of the peons to lay hold of me; but these I knocked down, as I did three or four others in succession; till, at last, they overpowered me from behind, holding me firmly pinioned and unable to move hand or foot.

Meantime, Leslie had also come to action, and knocked the police peons about like nine-pins. It was in vain that they rushed at him

in threes or fours: all went down before his conquering fist, and nothing could withstand the tremendous cross-buttocks of the sturdy old tar.

Some of the peons at length drew their weapons; but the inspector shouted amidst the fray,—

“Tulwar ni! Langooty! Langooty!”

Thereupon a cunning old peon rapidly unfolded fifty yards of turban, the ample covering of his crafty skull; one end of which he held himself, giving the other to an equally experienced hand. These two fellows then commenced running round the gallant Leslie in opposite directions, winding about his sturdy legs such a Gordian knot as Alexander himself couldn't cut; till, at last, with a pull together, they brought my champion down upon his back! and he fell like a Martello tower, shaking the whole building to its foundation.

Being thus, like another Gulliver, at the mercy of his Lilliputian foes, the brave old tar was tied neck and heels, and left alone with his glory; while I was marched off to a boat, and conveyed to Madras, the agonizing screams of poor Elise still ringing in my ears.

At Madras my friends all came round me, and represented in its true light the utter madness of a struggle with the government, on a point wherein its right was as clear as the sun at noon-day. I reluctantly yielded at length to my fate, and gave my parole that I would go on board without further resistance, which I did, my luggage having been all shipped before me.

Ere I left Madras, however, I got my hoondie cashed, and purchased a splendid cashmere shawl, for one thousand rupees; which, with a most affectionate letter, I despatched by a trusty messenger to my dearly-beloved Elise. The following morning we sailed with the ebb-tide, and I bade adieu for ever to a country which had been so productive to me of good and evil.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE TWO BRACELETS.

I SHALL not inflict upon my patient readers a narrative of my passage home, which comprised, however, many curious incidents of foreign adventure. Suffice it to say, that, after touching at Colombo, Cape-Town, St. Helena, where I had the gratification of seeing “the great European culprit” and Ascension, where I assisted in the capture of some splendid turtle, I arrived, at length, in the Downs, after a passage of five months and six days. I landed immediately at Dover, and was speedily in the world's metropolis.

I must also leave to the reader's imagination the delight I experienced at finding myself once more in this *ne plus ultra* of modern civilization, after so many years of half-savage life in the Spanish bivouac and the jungles of India; where the refinements of society are so little attended to, and the humanizing intercourse with the better part of creation is of such rare occurrence, that the mind

becomes cynical, and the manners coarse and awkward, under the privation. Like a captive just escaped from a dungeon, and mad to enjoy the liberty for which he has pined in vain, I eagerly sought those social enjoyments from which I had been so long debarred; and fortune seemed to meet my wishes half-way; for many of my old militia and Peninsular friends, who had either attained high army rank, or were accustomed to move in the fashionable world, were glad to renew our former intimacy, and vied with each other in introducing me to their respective circles, wherein I was received as favourably as my most sanguine hopes could anticipate.

But, happily, I did not lose myself in the vortex of dissipation so entirely as to neglect my military prospects—still the ruling passion of my breast. Having frequently heard of the superior efficacy of a campaign at the Horse Guards, over those anywhere else, I resolved to try its virtues. I, accordingly, prepared a memorial, and attended the levees of the military secretary, Sir Herbert Taylor, the most amiable man in office I have ever encountered. Through his intervention with the commander-in-chief, then the Duke of York, justly and significantly styled “the soldier’s friend,” I was soon gazetted to a company in the —th, wherein I subsequently met several of my old Peninsular companions.

Having wetted my new commission in the most approved fashion, received the congratulations of numerous friends, and enjoyed for a couple of months, sagely and judiciously, I trust, the “never-ending, still-beginning” pleasures of London, I resolved to pay a visit to my relatives in Ireland. I accordingly wrote to inform my brother and sister, that I was coming over to beat up their quarters, previously to joining my new regiment, which was then at the Cape.

Before I left London, however, I submitted my splendid bracelet to the inspection of a lapidary, who valued it at six hundred pounds, and offered me that sum for the stones alone; but I refused to part with the jewel, being, I confess, somewhat vain of such a present from a sovereign princess, and the handsomest woman I had ever beheld. Nay, I could not help contrasting its brilliancy with the dulness of the little hair bracelet that still occupied its original position on my left wrist; smiling at the same time with great self-complacency, and a species of contempt, at the humble offering of my little cousin.

But my heart smote me as I did so, and my eyes filled with tears as I thought of that morning when the dear little creature clung to me, sobbing her very soul out, as the only good she longed for on earth; binding me to her for ever, as it were, with all her worldly possessions—her little bracelet, woven by herself with her own rich auburn tresses. With a feeling of deep contrition for the momentary baseness into which I had been betrayed, I replaced the splendid bauble on my wrist, exclaiming: “Lie thou there, a valued gift it is true, from one who is the willing bride of another; but nearer and dearer to my heart is this unpretending relic of true love, whose pure ethereal flame can never be rivalled by the cold glitter of the bright-est diamond!”

“Poor Honoria!” I thus continued to soliloquize, “into which of

the numberless paths of life has fortune directed your footsteps? Are you now the homespun wife of some sturdy farmer, surrounded by your children, your cattle, and your poultry; every thought directed to the due fulfilment of your rustic duties, and all ambition bounded by the periodical splendours of the market-day? Or, are you the less fortunate spouse of some high-born spendthrift, some needy artist, or some wandering soldier, who can but ill appreciate the sterling value of your heart? Wherever you are, and however employed, my poor little cousin, may your happiness equal the sum of your own merits, and of my wishes! Providence can do no more for you, in this world, at least."

Inwardly gratified by this apostrophe to the virtues of my dear little cousin, I now made preparations for my visit to the *natale solum*; but, strange to say, in spite of reason and reflection, I could still look upon her in no other light than as the little girl who fainted in my arms thirteen years before, on my quitting her for ever.

I cannot now recollect what it was that took me round by Bristol and Cork, in my journey to Ireland on the present occasion. Perhaps it was that, being so much accustomed to light infantry manœuvres, I was desirous of coming upon my friends by a flank movement, when they would naturally look for my front approach *viâ* Dublin: perhaps it was the finger of destiny, which governs and controls the course of human events; while man, "proud man," in his own conceit is a free agent, forsooth, and unlimited master of his thoughts and actions!

But, leaving the solution of this knotty point to future metaphysicians and ideologists, to the "Beautiful City" I went, by the Bristol steamer; and thence to Michelstown by the mail. From the latter place I took a post-chaise, to cross the Galtie mountains to Tipperary; a wild and dreary piece of road which I have seldom seen equalled, except, perhaps, in the Apennines between Florence and Bologna.

Every one recollects the old joke about Irish posting, in which Judy, the cook, is represented bringing out a red-hot poker to give the mare a burn before she'd start; and if I might form a judgment from the specimen of cattle I was favoured with, there was really very little exaggeration in the caricature. Such a rickety fabric of a post-chaise, dangling at the heels of such a pair of raw-boned, broken-kneed hacks, had never come under my observation before: but it was Hobson's choice; and, as the post-boy very pithily remarked, I must "either pad the hoof, or contint myself wid the handsome illegant carriage that the Prince Raygent himself might be proud to ride in." We accordingly started on our ill-omened journey; and the dislocation of bones I experienced for the first three miles, still occupies a very prominent, though not a very verdant spot in memory's waste.

We at length began to ascend the Galties, which brought a little relief, for this simple reason, that our progress being necessarily very slow, the jolting was not so incessant as before. But now a still more serious difficulty began to manifest itself; for the steep ascent was evidently knocking up my half-starved jades, and I began seriously to entertain the agreeable prospect of passing the night without food or shelter on this bleak and inhospitable mountain.

Still, however, we struggled onwards, every step diminishing my hopes of reaching the end of my journey : while, as if to increase my vexation, my rascal of a post-boy went on whistling and singing alternately ; occasionally favouring me with a tune on the jew's-harp, as if we were going on velvet, and every now and then addressing some sage remark or droll saying to the poor soul who sat cursing his stars in the corner of his shandradan.

"I'll engage, sir," he would say, "this is the first time you have ever been on the sod, now, and I'm sure it is."

"Why do you think so?" I demanded.

"Because you don't take things aisy," he replied, "and you don't seem to be used to our iligant roads ; and sure the devil a betther can be found from this to themselves, anyhow."

"It is not so much of your roads I complain," I said, "as of your carriage and cattle."

"See that now!" returned the driver, with a grin. "Faith, I'll engage 'tis they were the smart nags whin the masther's father bought 'em, God be good to his soul! five-and-twenty years ago, come Michaelmas, as I have heard tell."

"The chaise is well matched with the horses," I observed, "for antiquity, at all events."

"Aunt who, sir?" demanded the fellow with a leer, that left it doubtful whether his question arose from ignorance or insolence. "I don't think masther ever had an aunt of that name, sir, at all, at all. But as for the hack,* sure it belonged wanst to the Earl of Kingston ; the ould, ould earl, sir, that shot Beau Fijarrald (Fitzgerald) for running away wid his daughter ; an' he a lying in bed at the time."

"Who was lying in bed?" I asked.

"Colonel Fijarrald, sir," he replied. "An when the ould earl kem into his bedroom, wid a small young gun in his fist, he says to him, says he,—

"'You thief o' the world, you ran away wid my daughter,' says he.

"'No I didn't,' says Beau Fijarrald ; as bould as a lion ; 'twas she ran away wid me,' says he.

"Wid that, yer honour, the ould earl up wid his gun, and dhrove a brace of bullets into Beau Fijarrald, an' its a box o' could meat he was in a brace o' shakes, yer honour."

Thus my driver ran on, either from natural garrulity, or a wish to divert my attention from the wretched condition of his cattle ; sometimes whistling with that wild pathos peculiar to the Irish peasantry, and at others breathing forth a snatch of an old song teeming with drollery and fun. Nor was his patchwork conversation devoid of the serious and terrific ; for ghosts, hobgoblins, highwaymen, flying witches, and creaking gibbets formed the great staple of his reminiscences, especially as the night drawing on seemed naturally to suggest such grisly themes.

The sun was now sinking behind the lofty pinnacles of the mountains on our left, and the shadows of the rocks were projecting to an awful length ; when a fairy-like strain of music floated on the air, so unlike anything earthly that I stopped the chaise to listen to the delicate and tiny melody.

* The post-chaise is generally so called in the south of Ireland.

"'Tis the good people, sir," said the driver; "and it comes from the Danish mount beyond there, where they're houlding their junkets now, the Lord betune us and harm! myself often hears it when I comes up this road."

"Drive on," I said, "and you'll soon hear it louder."

"Sorrow a bit, sir," said he; "'tis never louder than that, yer honour."

He was mistaken, however; for at the next turn of the road the soft tones of the Irish pipes, which had hitherto been deadened by the intervention of some rocky eminences, swelled loudly on the breeze, intermingled with peals of laughter and shouts of merriment; and I hailed the ever-welcome sound as a happy omen.

After toiling up the mountain for another half-hour, by an evidently expiring effort of our sorry hacks, we at length reached a spot where two roads crossed each other; and there we found forty or fifty young men and women from some neighbouring hamlets, it being Sunday evening, dancing joyously to the music of a blind piper, who effectually roused the mountain echoes with the energy of his performance.

Our panting horses were now completely knocked up, and decidedly refused to budge another inch; while the peasants crowded around us, some quizzing my equipage, and others commiserating my dilemma; but all concurring in the opinion that the horses could go no further, and that no others could be procured within a distance of at least twelve miles.

At length, while venting my spleen in a polyglot tirade of expletives, foreign and domestic, one young fellow cried out,—

"Arrah, boys! let us dhraw the captain and his carriage over the top of the mountain, and give his garrons a bit of a rest."

A dozen voices instantly responded in the affirmative to this generous proposal: the horses were unharnessed, and the boys buckled to the traces, while the girls laughed and joined heartily in the frolic, by turns encouraging their swains, and quizzing those who stumbled, or seemed blown with the exercise. In this novel manner we at length reached the top of the mountain, three long miles, at least; and there the free-hearted fellows gave me a joyous cheer, and bade me God speed.

I insisted on their accepting something for their trouble; but this they decidedly refused.

"We know your honour's an officer," said their spokesman, "by the cock of your eye: but even if you were only a gentleman, we'd do as much and more for you, wid all the veins of our hearts."

"Hollo! Hollo!" exclaimed a rough manly voice at this moment, "what is the matter here? I hope nobody's hurt."

"Plaise yer honour, Mr. Fijarrald," replied half a dozen of my new friends, as a stout, middle-aged gentleman, on a powerful horse, now came in sight at a turning of the road. "Plaise yer honour, 'tis only the captain's horses are knocked up, and regular garrons they are too; and we have been giving him a lift up the hill."

"Well done, boys, well done!" said the stranger, whose countenance, as he approached, beamed with the most perfect good nature. "But, perhaps," he continued, "perhaps, the poor gentleman wants something more than a lift. Let me see, let me see."

He alighted, and coming up, shook me heartily by the hand, exclaiming,—

"I'm glad to see you, sir, but sorry for your mishap. Them garrons of yours arn't worth their oats. Oh, it's you, Mr. Dan! I have warn'd you before against coming up these mountains with such cattle as them."

"Then, plaise yer honour," said the post-boy, "its what my master has been going to the fair of Kilworth these three months past, to shoot himself with a couple of good nags; but as the captain was in a hurry to get to Tipperary——"

"To Tipperary!" interrupted the stranger; "he'll never get there with a pair of beasts that are only fit for the hounds: you and your master ought to be ashamed of yourselves; but stay, stay—let me see, let me see. I'll tell you, sir, what you had better do. In the first place, you had better stop at my poor cabin to-night, anyhow; and to-morrow we'll see more clearly before us: perhaps the beasts may recover strength enough to take you on; but if not, we'll find some other way, sure."

With many thanks and apologies, I accepted the kind offer of my new friend; who threw the bridle-rein over his arm, and we walked slowly down the hill together, towards the Glen of Aherlow; while he gave directions to our attendants, in the tone of a man accustomed to command.

"Now Dan," he said, "you move on with that old rattle-trap of yours to Glenville; and put it up in the coach-house till morning."

"Yis, yer honour," said Dan.

"Put your horses in the stable, Dan," he continued, "and give them a good feed of oats; I'm thinking it's some time since they've had a smell of that same."

"Thank yer honour," said Dan.

"Then Dan," continued the stranger, "take your own post by the kitchen-fire, and take a share of what's going."

"Long life to yer honour, and long may you reign!" cried Dan, as he whipped his horses into a trot down the hill; for they seemed to have some intuitive knowledge of the unwonted treat that was in store for them.

"And now, boys," resumed the stranger, "you follow Dan down to Glenville, and tell the mistress to give you all a drop o' the crather; and I'll engage she has some nice little cordial or other for the colreens, too, that have been helping you up the hill with that lumbering old chaise."

A cheer for Squire Fitzgerald now rang out boldly from the party of pedestrians, who set off in a race down the hill, laughing and frolicking with each other as if they were the happiest of God's creatures.

Mr. Fitzgerald and I followed them slowly; chatting as we went along, on the weather, the abundant harvest, and such other topics as a country gentleman may be supposed to relish, till we had got nearly half-way down the mountain; then, diverging from the main road, we followed another for some time, as it led into a wooded dell, or narrow valley, between two lofty spurs of the Galties, which

seemed planted there by nature to shelter the secluded and lovely spot from the northern blast. We at length arrived at a neat porter's lodge and iron gate, which being opened for us, my new friend gave me a cordial welcome to Glenville.

"*Caid mil a faltha!*" said the worthy man, shaking me by the hand; "but that's Greek to you, anyhow, for I perceive by your accent that you are an Englishman. It means a hundred thousand welcomes; and, if I may judge by your manners and conversation, you are entitled to every one of them."

I was about to express my grateful acknowledgments for the compliment, when the party of rustics returned, laughing and singing, from the house; and, as they wished us good night, they gave one more hearty cheer for Squire Fitzgerald, and the Knight of Glynn.

"That's a great relation of mine, sir," said my host, "who sometimes does me the honour of a visit, especially when he wants to canvass the county; but his sphere of life is too lofty for a plain gentleman-farmer like myself."

We were now surrounded by a dozen dogs, pointers, terriers, beagles, and one or two of those majestic stag-hounds, the breed of which is not yet extinct in Ireland; who kept frolicking, jumping, and barking with joy all the way up the avenue, as if determined to show the stranger, that the "*Caid mil a faltha!*" could be uttered by other tongues besides that of the master.

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE MOUNTAIN SYLPH.

THE autumn was pretty well advanced, and the breeze blew loud and shrill amongst the lofty trees that skirted the carriage-way; while the frequent rustling of the leaves, as they fell to the ground, was significant of approaching winter, and the cawing of the rooks became fainter and fainter, as they settled themselves for the night in their lofty habitations. The avenue led us to a broad, level lawn, on one side of which stood the mansion of my friend, a plain country residence, spacious, and, doubtless, comfortable, but without any pretensions to architectural beauty.

We were received at the front door by a couple of domestics; one of whom took Mr. Fitzgerald's horse, and the other lighted us into a venerable hall, hung round with fowling-pieces, fishing-rods, whips, hunting-caps, great coats, antlers, and other indications of the chase and rural life. From the hall, we proceeded at once into the drawing-room; where I was presented by my host as an English gentleman whose horses had knocked up on the road, and whom he had consequently entreated to take up his residence with them for the night, and as much longer as he might choose to honour them with his company.

"He is heartily welcome," said a comely matron, holding out her hand to me frankly and kindly: "but, good gracious, Edward, you can't imagine what a start I got when the chaise came up the avenue,

surrounded by all the neighbours. My heart leaped to my mouth; for I thought you might be hurt inside, and the roads are not very safe of late at this hour of the evening."

"Tut, tut, old woman," said Fitzgerald, giving his wife a good hearty buss, "there's not a man in the barony would hurt a hair of Ned Fitzgerald's head. But where's the *colleen dhass*?"

"Here I am," replied a voice of silvery sweetness, whose tones thrilled to my heart with some secret and undefinable power. "Here I am, holding a learned discussion with this venerable ecclesiastic, on the authenticity of Ossian's poems."

I turned with surprise to where the voice proceeded from, and beheld a young lady, to whom my host introduced me as his sister-in-law; he also introduced me to Father Carrol, the venerable ecclesiastic before mentioned, whose laughing eyes and rubicund visage displayed anything but symptoms of mortification and penance.

"Pray, which side of this vexed question do you take, colleen machree?" demanded Fitzgerald.

"Oh, I am entirely for their authenticity," she replied.

"I am afraid," said the priest, with a smile, "that the ladies all decide from their feelings in this case, rather than their judgment."

"And where," cried the lady with vivacity, "where can we find a better guide than the instinct, or feeling, call it which you will, that Heaven has implanted in our breasts, to direct us, with unerring aim, to a just conception of all that is noblest in our nature, and of language the fittest and most eloquent to give it expression? It is very well for the bookish pedant, whose heart is dry and withered as his musty old tomes; or for the cold sceptic, who ventures even to sneer at those manifestations of Divine power which we are taught to revere from our infancy; to rail at the so-called impostor to whose elegant muse we owe this fascinating production. But if all others do not confess, by their humid eyes and palpitating hearts, the touch of nature, the light of truth, and the power of eloquence which sparkle and shine through every strain of Ossian, carrying the rapt soul from the enjoyment of every luxury that modern art and science have ever invented, to revel on the bleak hills, the chilly mists, the rolling clouds, and the shadowy forms of Morven, then I willingly yield the palm to my reverend adversary, who, while he denies the authenticity of Ossian on that internal evidence which seldom deceives, exacts from us the most implicit belief in mysteries a thousand times more profound and inscrutable."

The reader may, perhaps, look upon this as a little flight *ad captandum*, a feminine ruse to attract the notice of the stranger; but I assure him that such was not the case. The spirited defence of Macpherson was uttered in such quiet and lady-like tones, and the speaker was, to all appearance, so unconscious of my presence, having as yet scarcely so much as looked at me, that I could not regard it as any more than her natural and customary mode of expression.

This also seemed to be the general idea; for every one either assented to or dissented from the remarks of the fair champion in the ordinary manner, but myself. For my part, I stood open-mouthed, gazing upon her with an intensity that must have been construed into

rudeness or stupidity. I had often, amidst the conflict of opinions on this subject, endeavoured to analyze my own ideas of Ossian, yet never until now could I find befitting words to express them; but I did not hesitate to adopt at once as my own the language of the fair girl who now sat before me, altogether unconscious of the interest she was exciting in my breast. Whether it was from this coincidence of sentiment, or from the silvery tone of her voice, which still seemed to hover in the air, I stood gazing, stupidly enough I confess, as if waiting for the conclusion of some delightful strain of ethereal melody.

To relieve me from this awkward position, which was too apparent to all, Mrs. Fitzgerald observed to her husband,—

“I have had the gentleman’s luggage brought in here for the present, as he may probably have occasion for it.”

“Ay, here it is,” said mine host. “Three large portmanteaus, with the letters P. B. in brass. I hope they’re all right, sir; these are your initials, I presume?”

“Yes, yes,” I replied; “and they remind me that I ought to apologize for not acquainting you with my name before now. It is Blenkinsop—Peter Blenkinsop, at your service.”

“A good old English name, sir,” said my host, presenting me over again to the company as Captain Peter Blenkinsop.

Now, why I gave this name instead of my own, I have no more distinct idea than the man in the moon. It could not have been with the view of imposing on or even hoaxing my worthy host, who merited far different treatment at my hands; nor was it because I was ashamed of my own name in my own country, after having borne it so long in so many others; but, in fact, honest Ned Fitzgerald had set me down as an Englishman, and my own easy complying disposition induced me to fall in with his humour for the moment, rather than subject him to the mortification of retracting his first impression. It was, moreover, a matter of no consequence; for we were all utter strangers to each other, and would separate on the morrow without a chance of ever meeting again.

The family tea-table was now laid out, loaded through its whole extent with all appliances for a hearty meal, including ham, tongue, cold beef, cold fowl, &c. &c. We took our places in a merry circle, altogether free from the constraint of etiquette; our numbers being increased by the only son and two daughters of my host; quiet, nice-looking children, who now, for the first time, made their appearance.

Chance had placed me exactly opposite the young lady whom my new friend had distinguished by the epithet of *colleen dhass*, which signifies, I believe, darling girl, or some other term of equal endearment; and mysteriously touched as I had been by her voice, I was now still more so by her features. These were not regularly beautiful, but they beamed with intelligence and good humour: in short, I could not keep my eyes off them, for they possessed that charm of graceful intellect and mental superiority which fascinate more deeply than the most decided beauty, or symmetry of form or outline. I could never have seen her before, that was clear; and yet there was

something in her countenance that recalled a dim vision of the past; but whether it was a sleeping or a waking dream, I could not for my life decide.

"Pshaw!" I mentally exclaimed, as I helped myself to a huge slice of cold roast beef, "it cannot be that I am going to take the distemper again, as that puppy Richardson used to say. It cannot be that a heart so often seared to the core with the flames of love for some of the most beautiful women of the various countries it has been my lot to visit, should now once more be sensible to the attractions of an Irish country girl. Impossible! why, as I hope for mercy, she has a pug-nose; and though she does not squint, yet her eyes are full of fire that indicates a little of the shrew. Then her brogue—nay, nay, let me do her justice, she has no brogue, not an atom; her accent is purer than my own. Why, on my life, she has been talking French and Italian with Father Carroll, with a facility and eloquence that I have never heard surpassed! Where the deuce could she have picked up such accomplishments amidst these woods, and wilds, and rocky mountains?"

A brilliant peal of laughter, full, rich, melodious, ringing from the cherry lips of the fair object before me, recalled me suddenly to the absurdity of my conduct; for, during this inaudible soliloquy of mine, instead of eating as a hungry man should have done, I was actually piling my plate with cold ham, roast fowl, beef, toast, bread-and-butter, slim cake, and seed cake, to a degree that set the whole table in a roar.

I apologized to the lady of the house for the strangely ridiculous part I had been playing, which I endeavoured to account for on the plea of being subject to fits of abstraction.

She received my excuse with the most perfect good humour, and hoped to see me make use of at least a good portion of what I had before me.

"Oh, as for that, ma'am," said the priest, "I'm thinking that Captain Blenkinsop would make a right good Catholic; for, while he was loading his plate with a week's provisions, he was practising a degree of abstinence that would do honour to a Carmelite friar."

"But abstinence, my dear sir," said Fitzgerald, falling in with the priest's humour, "is not enough for a proselyte. In this matter-of-fact age we require more striking proofs: 'tis not the cowl, you know, that makes the monk."

"Then I hope, sir," returned the clergyman, "that you will accept saint-worship as one of those proofs; for I can safely declare that all the time the captain was garnishing his plate, in his fit of abstraction, he never once took his eyes off the fair countenance of Miss Honoria Blake."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, with an involuntary start that upset my tea-cup, to the renewed amusement of the younger portion of the family, though the elders had tact enough to avoid all notice of my *gaucherie*; while the young lady herself, rising from the table, went to the piano, and ran her fingers over the keys, with a light, rapid, and graceful execution that showed her mastery of the instrument.

The riddle was then read—the sympathetic cord which had touched my heart was accounted for:—before me sat a grown-up, elegant, and highly-accomplished woman, the *protégée* of the benevolent countess of Kingston, and the dear little child who, thirteen years before, had wept herself into fits at my departure for the wars; after having placed upon my wrist, as a *gage d'amour*, her little bracelet, the faithful companion of all my wanderings and vicissitudes.

Oh! how I longed to throw myself at her feet, and display her childish gift to her astonished eyes; but no, I was determined to preserve my incognito, for I felt that I was, in downright reality, taking the distemper again; and I was therefore prudently desirous of reconnoitring the enemy, before I made any further advance in the campaign.

Honorina now called her young cousins to the piano, and said with the sweetest smile in the world;—

“I hope Captain Blenkinsop will pardon me if I give my young pupils a lesson while he finishes his repast.”

Will it be believed that I had not at that moment self-possession enough to utter a word in reply to the dear soul upon whom I was gazing with an intensity that bordered upon rudeness, and actually covered her sweet face with blushes. Indeed, I began to fear that she already looked upon me as a sulky ill-mannered John Bull; and my confusion increased so rapidly, under this impression, that my worthy host and his lady started fifty different topics to relieve me from my embarrassment.

It was in vain, however: the days of my childhood came vividly upon my memory, and thoughts and feelings which had long lain dormant in my breast, checked and smothered by a long intercourse with a selfish and artificial world, now gushed forth upon the withered region of my heart with all the freshness and vivacity of a spring in the desert. Silent and absorbed I sat, as if listening enchanted to a duet of Pleyel's, performed by the two young ladies with great correctness and good taste, but nothing further.

“Honorina, dear,” said Fitzgerald, when the duet was finished: “Captain Blenkinsop seems very fond of music, suppose you let him hear some of our Irish melodies—‘Shawn O'Dheer O'Glanna,’ for instance, will be quite germane to the matter; being not only a national melody of great beauty in itself, but native to these very hills and streams that now surround us. You must know, Captain Blenkinsop,” he continued, “that ‘Shawn O'Dheer O'Glanna,’ signifies John O'Dwyer of the Glyn or Glen; for you are now in the Glen of Aherlow, one of the richest valleys in the south of Ireland, in agricultural produce at least; and of this valley John O'Dwyer was one of the ancient worthies, whose name has been embalmed in song, as you shall hear.”

During this explanation of my host, altogether unnecessary, if he knew but all, Honorina had been tuning a handsome harp that stood by the piano; and touching its strings with a mastery that quite amazed me, she ran a prelude of wild and poetical fancy that appropriately introduced the sweetly plaintive air of “John O'Dwyer of the Glyn;” accompanying the instrument with the Irish words,

in a voice of touching pathos, pure melody, and highly-cultivated taste.

To say that I was surprised, entranced, enraptured, is but faintly to express my feelings at that moment of exquisite enjoyment; seated by and gazing upon the cherished companion of my boyhood, though to her an unknown and indifferent stranger. As every note of a melody so familiar and so dear fell soothingly upon a heart so long indurated, as I thought, by its commerce with the world, but still so susceptible of the tenderest impressions, I felt the tears rolling down my cheeks in streams; and I preserved a breathless silence, fearful of losing a single grace or turn of what was certainly an inspired version of that dear old strain: but still I had not the power of paying a single compliment to the accomplished artist on its termination.

"I perceive, sir," said my worthy host, "that you have a soul for music, and have no doubt that you play upon some instrument yourself."

"I play a little," I replied carelessly, "upon the idler's instrument—the flute."

"Then, perhaps," said Fitzgerald, "you could favour us with something in your turn. George, bring your flute to Captain Blenkinsop."

George, a fine, ingenuous, bluff boy, immediately brought me an old one-keyed boxwood flute, upon which he was learning to play.

"I thank you, my dear George," I said; "but I am like the little boy who could only read in his own book. If, however, Miss Blake will honour me with an accompaniment, I have an instrument in one of my portmanteaus."

"With great pleasure," replied Honoria; her brilliant eyes sparkling as if she felt refreshed by hearing at length, and almost for the first time, the sound of my voice.

Having displayed my flute to the wondering eyes of George, who could never sufficiently admire its numerous keys, and faultless symmetry, I played "John O'Dwyer of the Glyn," from memory, with a charming accompaniment, by Honoria; to which succeeded the "Coolun," "Savournaa Dheelish," and many others of the Irish melodies.

It was now the turn of my hearers to express their surprise and admiration, which they did with all that complimentary warmth so peculiarly Irish.

"What astonishes me above all," said my host, "is the perfectly national expression you give to our Irish airs. I could almost swear you were a native of these hills and valleys, and imbued with similar feelings to our own."

"I have been a good deal amongst the Irish abroad," I replied, carelessly, "and have picked up a great many of their ways and forms of thought and expression."

This satisfied the old people; but a shadow of gravity fell upon the speaking features of Honoria; then placing one of Mozart's Masses on the reading-desk of the piano, she said somewhat archly, and with a searching glance of her luminous eyes:—

"I should not be surprised if you knew something about this, and can improvise an accompaniment."

Thus put upon my mettle, we played it together; and Honoria sang the Latin words, to the great delight of our auditory, especially of Father Carrol; who expressed a hearty wish that he could command such music at his humble organ-loft in the Glyn.

From Mozart we went to Beethoven and Weber, who has left one opera, at least, which is an incantation from beginning to end. We then ran through all the great masters of the Italian school with equal facility and success; and by the time supper was announced, my worthy host again congratulated me on my performance, saying at the same time to his sister-in-law,—

“Honoria, dear! you have at last got, I won’t say a rival, or a competitor, but a fellow-musician, worthy of your own splendid talents.”

At supper, however, Honoria was silent and reserved; while my spirits, on the contrary, ran riot, as it were, and I no longer seemed the sulky John Bull they must at first have taken me for. I chatted with the priest, on his own special challenge, in French, Italian, and even Spanish, which he spoke a little; related anecdotes of the wars in Holland, Spain, and India; but particularly won Fitzgerald’s heart by graphic descriptions of boar, tiger, and elephant hunting; with all the wonders of Oriental field sports, so strange and captivating to the English ear. In short, before we separated for the night, he made me promise, “nothing loth,” I can assure the reader, that I would spend a week with him at Glenville, as I did not appear to be pressed for time.

As may be well imagined, I did not sleep much on this eventful night; for, though my carriage-exercise had fatigued me a great deal more than if I had walked the whole way, yet the agitation of my mind, occasioned by an event so unexpected, and, indeed, so marvellous, kept me for a long time tossing about in restless anxiety. I had, however, a few hours’ sleep, before a brilliant sun, and the music of a thousand birds recalled me to another day in my chequered existence.

The morning was warm and genial; and throwing up the window-sash, I sat down to enjoy a view at once the most splendid and interesting to my feelings that I had ever gazed upon.

There it lay before me, as on a map, the lovely Glen of Aherlow, through whose verdant fields I had so often strayed in careless childhood, when visions of life filled my youthful mind, very different, indeed, from the stern reality I had since experienced. There it lay, in full view, from the commanding position I occupied; the silvery Suir winding its fruitful course through fields of green meadow or yellow harvest, hiding at times its pure stream in some hoary wood or young plantation, and, anon, appearing beyond, till it finally mingled with the light fleecy clouds that fringed the horizon; while the Galties, on the one hand, and Slieve-na-muck on the other, reared their cloud-capped heads, proud guardians of the secluded Eden that lay between them.

Throughout this fertile vale, cottages, hamlets, and farm-yards were sprinkled; and Father Carrol’s modest church arose in decent pride, its belfry resounding with the summons to early prayers.

These symptoms of rural life and industry extended considerably up the mountain, on whose rugged side was perched the residence of my new friend ; his gardens lying in terraces before me on the downward slope, filled with all the riches of floral and horticultural produce. In the centre of the flower garden, which lay nearest to the lawn, there was a pretty fountain, supplied from a small cascade that tumbled down the lofty rocks in rear of the dwelling-house ; and beside the granite basin that received the waters of the jet, stood my dear little Honoria, feeding the gold and silver fishes.

Strange that even still I continued to look upon her simply as my infant playfellow, and thought it odd that she did not, as before, spring to my embrace, twine her little arms round my neck, and cover my cheek with kisses. But when I looked at the full and perfect form which now stood before me, I felt that a new phase of existence had opened upon us both ; and that our future weal or woe entirely depended on the impression we should now mutually make upon each other.

When she had finished the first act of duty, Honoria skipped off to her flower-beds ; with skilful hands tending and directing their luxuriant growth, and selecting from all a bouquet to adorn the breakfast-table. But in all she did, in every act and movement, there was such healthful agility and feminine grace, that I could not for an instant withdraw my eyes from her elegant and elastic figure ; but sat rapt, as it were, with love and admiration, when a voice from the lawn under my window called out,—

“Hillo, captain ! are you enjoying the fresco ?”

It was my worthy host and his son George, both equipped as anglers, with rods over their shoulders and baskets by their sides, apparently well stocked with the finny prey.

“What ! have you been down to the river already ?” I demanded.

“Yes,” he replied ; “George and I have been killing a few trout, in spite of the bright sunshine, that you may judge for yourself of the produce of our Irish streams. But dress and come down ; breakfast will soon be ready, and I warrant it, you’ll enjoy them hot from the gridiron.”

I cast one more glance at the garden, but Honoria had vanished at the sound of our voices : having nothing further to detain me, I descended to the parlour, where the breakfast-table was already laden with every requisite for a hearty and luxurious meal ; a bouquet of the most lovely flowers adorning the centre, and casting a rich fragrance round the room.

There was no one present, as yet, but my host’s two young daughters, who were seated at a table near the window, drawing some flowers from nature. I complimented them on their occupation, especially when they told me they were solely taught by their aunt Honoria ; who, by the possession of this delightful art, thus added another link of steel to my already enslaved and captive heart.

Upon the table lay a large, handsome portfolio, well stocked with masterly sketches of foreign scenery and costume, the work of my dear little talented cousin. Having, with permission from the young

ladies, looked them over, I was about to close the book, when a slip of paper fell from one of its pockets, upon which several attempts had been made, in colours, and with various success, to recall the features of a countenance which I fondly imagined was my own. Indeed, this was put beyond a doubt, by the words, "Poor Percy!" being written underneath.

This little memento of enduring affection, I made no scruple of purloining; and I had scarcely concealed it in my pocket-book, when the company entered to breakfast.

It is needless to say that this happy week flew like lightning; every day, however spent, being closed with delicious music and social chat. The first, my host and I shot over the Knight of Glynn's preserves; the second, we followed the hounds of a neighbouring club; the third, we enjoyed the splendid trout-fishing of the river Suir; the fourth, we had a riding-party, in which Honoria was, as usual, pre-eminent; the fifth, we had a pic-nic at the Devil's Punch-Bowl, on the topmost summit of the Galties; the sixth, being rainy, we played billiards at Lord Massy's seat, in the glen; and on Sunday, the seventh, we attended Father Carrol's neat little chapel, where, again, I accompanied Honoria with my flute; as, to the delight of the assembled rustics, she drew from a sweet little organ peal upon peal of that celestial harmony which should never be divorced from religious rites, as softening the asperities of the world, attuning the affections of the heart, and elevating the soul to the purest and holiest contemplation of the Deity.

A second and a third week still found me at Glenville, utterly regardless of the great world in which I had yet a part to play; and living as if life had no other duty, occupation, or pleasure, than riding, dancing, walking, talking to, and playing the flute with Honoria. We were, in fact, all in all to each other; for though, at times, a strange mysterious shadow would rest upon her expressive features, as if she was suffering a pang of self-reproach; and her thoughtful eye would dwell upon mine, as though her eager spirit was endeavouring to retrace some vision of past joy; yet, having given up, with a sigh, the vain attempt, she would return my caresses with all the bewitching frankness and confiding simplicity of a devoted and affectionate heart.

But time and space both hint that I must not linger over this closing scene of my strange eventful history.

One evening, in our little family circle, we were chatting over the varied manners of the foreign countries I had visited; and, amongst other peculiarities, I related to my friends the chivalrous custom of the Rajpoot ladies, in securing the services of a champion, by presenting him with a bracelet, which constitutes him the *rakhi-bund bae*, or bracelet-bound brother of the fair. I also displayed to their admiring gaze the valuable bracelet I had received from the princess of Ruttunpoor, and related the adventure connected therewith. I concluded by requesting, with an appropriate compliment, Honoria's acceptance of the splendid jewel; but her eyes filled with tears, her features were again overcast by the mysterious shadow, and, with somewhat formal politeness, she declined the present.

"Why, Honoria, dear," said Fitzgerald, "this reminds you of your *gage d'amour* to Percy Blake."

"Edward, Edward!" cried Mrs. Fitzgerald, "how can you be so inconsiderate? The *gage d'amour*, Captain Blenkinsop, mentioned by my husband, was nothing more than a hair bracelet, presented by a child of six years old to her cousin when he entered the army."

"Of course it was," returned Fitzgerald; "and I was wrong to call it a *gage d'amour*. It was nothing but a childish gift; and has doubtless been long since lost and forgotten by the recipient."

"Perhaps not," I said. "Perhaps you do poor Percy Blake an injustice in saying so."

"Perhaps I do," replied Fitzgerald; "and, if so, I'm sorry for it; for, after all, he was a fine fellow, and an honour to the sod, having greatly distinguished himself, as I am told, in the Peninsula and India. But it is so long since we have heard anything of him direct from himself, that he has doubtless forgotten his friends and relatives in this part of the world."

"Would Honoria," I demanded, "like to see her *gage d'amour* once more?"

"Oh, Heavens!" she exclaimed, gasping for breath, "What do you—what can you possibly mean?"

"Behold, my Honoria!" I cried, kneeling before her, and baring my wrist, "Behold your *gage d'amour* just as you yourself placed it, thirteen years ago, on the wrist of your own, own faithful Percy Blake."

With a scream of wonder and delight, the dear girl threw her arms around my neck, and hid her tears and blushes in my breast; while Fitzgerald danced about the room like a madman, shouting at the extent of his lungs:

"Huzza, huzza! I thought there was Irish blood in his veins!"

In another fortnight, Honoria and I were married by Father Carroll, in the little temple at the glen; and a long course of domestic felicity has amply proved the truth of the proverb—

"Happy is the wooing,
That is not long a-doing!"

The ceremony was performed in the presence of all our assembled friends and relatives; Honoria's delighted mother exclaiming, as she presented me with the hand of my beautiful bride:

"My dear child, I hope you will never again have occasion to say, as you have so often done, 'Oh, what shall I do for my cousin Percy!'"

Gentle readers, and kind friends, who have thus far accompanied me in my unpretending narrative, I now bid you heartily farewell; having nothing further to communicate, beyond the ordinary routine of military life, in these "piping times," when the crafty cunning of John Doe and Richard Roe has succeeded the open daring of the foe in the field, and the prisoner of peace is treated more scurvily than the prisoner of war.

Having outlived many of my contemporaries, and being thus isolated, as it were, with respect to feeling and reminiscence in the new military world that is springing up around me, I have, with the assistance of my generous rajpoot, and my Deccan and Pindarrie prize-money, lodged "the needful" for an unattached majority; and purpose, as soon as I am gazetted, to retire to my paternal acres, there, if possible, to gather around me a few of my cherished companions of field and forest, and, amidst the blessings of love and friendship, to sink, with patient submission to the Divine Will, into that universal decay of matter which precedes the spiritual life to come.

THE END.

THE
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.

BY
HENRY CURLING, ESQ.

“ Oh, Heaven! that one might read the book of fate;
 Oh, if this were seen,
The happiest youth,—viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,—
Would shut the book, and sit him down and die.”

SHAKSPERE.

SIXTEENTH THOUSAND.

LONDON:
G. ROUTLEDGE & CO., FARRINGDON STREET.
NEW YORK: 18, BEEKMAN STREET.
1856.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following story records the life of a man, who, because he met with frequent misfortunes, believed himself to be languishing under the ban of fate—a notion consonant to a popular fallacy. A more dangerous delusion, however, cannot be entertained. It is one that deadens our endeavours; precludes a scrutiny into the character of those means which, as they often miscarry, ought at least to be suspected; hinders us from adopting new schemes of life, and new modes of action; and tempts us to lay on *chance* the blame more justly attributable to ourselves.

The hero of this tale, then, shows the folly and madness of unbridled passion and reckless impulse, which never fail to produce disastrous results. His sophistical reasoning is, in fact, only the blind solace of self-love—of that unhappy flattery and egotism which veil from us one of the most important truths, namely, that—"CONDUCT IS FATE."



THE
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

"A heavier task could not have been imposed,
Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable;
Yet that the world may witness that my end
Was wrought by nature, not by vile offence,
I'll utter what my sorrow gives me leave."

SHAKESPEARE.

I AM a native of that pleasant county of England, called Yorkshire: and my parents are descended from one of the most ancient families in that part of our island. I was born heir to a considerable estate, and the only child of my parents. My mother died when I was about ten years of age; she was considered extremely beautiful, and my father doated on her to excess, consequently, after her death he refused all consolation, and withdrew himself almost entirely from society. He was a good, but rather violent tempered man. Indeed, without partiality, I may say he was superior to the usual order of country gentlemen.

In early youth he had served for many years in the army; but, after marrying, he quitted the profession of arms, in order to live in ease and retirement amongst his native woods and fields.

My early education was at a school in the neighbouring town, and I also made some further progress at home under a private tutor. Having thus a great deal of my own way allowed me, my father generally preferring to live secluded and alone, I saw little of society in my nonage. The few folks who used to come to our house were, for the most part, some of his old army friends, and one or two intimate acquaintances whom he much esteemed. He, however, was passionately fond of the chase, kept a good stable, and I always had my choice amongst his stud.

Occasionally he used to accompany me in my excursions:

but at other times I was allowed to pursue my own erratic disposition, and as he frequently took periodical fits of seclusion, during which he liked none (not even myself) to trespass upon his solitude, I was then left entirely to my own control and guidance, and being of a roving disposition, wandered over the country, wherever chance or my steed might lead me. Being thus left to myself in my peregrinations, I became of a thoughtful and romantic disposition, frequently spending whole days in the solitude of the forest, or in loitering about the ruins of an old castle which was situate in our domain, and had been the residence of our crusading ancestors: trying in such vicinity to fancy myself some doughty champion or knight errant of the olden time.

Thus, then, the most lonely haunts and the most picturesque ruins were often sought out with feelings of delight. Had I lived some centuries back, I should doubtless have been the veriest "redresser of grievances" in Christendom; as, however, I could not be a knight cased in panoply of steel, I resolved to become a man-at-arms of the time being, and accordingly solicited my sire's leave to enter a regiment of dragoons. No opposition being made to my wishes, a letter was forthwith dispatched to the Commander-in-Chief, recommending me for the purchase of a cornetcy of horse.

In due course an official letter was received from the Commander-in-Chief, saying that my application would be granted on the first favourable opportunity; which serving for the present to tranquillize my mind, I somewhat prematurely visited, and in a measure took leave of, all my old haunts and favourite resorts. The mossy and gnarled oak, beneath whose shade I had oftentimes spent whole days, I prepared to part from, as from a dear and beloved friend. The ruined archway, too, and the ivy-clad wall, I loved as intensely; whilst the mouldering towers, which in former times had owned my ancestors as lords, had witnessed all their feudal pride, and seen them depart for the crusade, seemed ever to look down upon me with protecting influence. I loved, too, each remaining iron stanchion of those ruined windows, which had so long survived the captives they once enthralled, and every stone of the building was an old and cherished acquaintance. Indeed, I almost wept at the idea of parting from these intimate friends of my youth; and at such times well nigh resolved to give up my military mania, content to live and die as my father so often urged me, a quiet, respectable country squire.

Such, however, was not to be my career, and I felt that such existence would be almost a living death to me. In short, as I before hinted, my brain being quixotically constructed, I was as violently carried away by the idea of the stirring

adventures, the new scenes, fresh quarters, and the uncommon exploits incident to enrolment amongst a squadron of hussars as the Knight of La Mancha was confounded by his perusal of the chivalrous feats of Amadis de Gaul and Don Bellianis of Greece.

It chanced, that having one day set out on a fishing excursion, mounted on a spirited hunter, and carrying my rod athwart my saddle-bow, in making a short cut through some plantations, I saw, at a little distance before me, in a glade of the wood, a fierce struggle between two men; one of them I perceived was on horseback, endeavouring to defend himself against his more powerful adversary, who, having captured his bridle, was endeavouring to bring him to the ground.

The efforts of the horseman to defend himself I perceived were growing every instant more feeble; and although he managed to parry some of the ruffianly blows of his assailant, and clung tenaciously to his saddle, it was evident the strife was drawing towards a conclusion.

As I gazed with surprise upon this scene, I quickened my pace towards the combatants, and observing that the equestrian was evidently an elderly gentleman, and his assailant a common-looking ruffian, I considered it a regular case of 'stand and deliver.' Galloping, therefore, to the rescue, I charged the combatants with such impetuosity that I completely overacted my part, and driving them "horse and foot" to the earth, with the violence of the shock, came myself also to the ground some few paces from them.

Like a champion in the lists I had so often read of, I leaped to my feet in an instant, and, disengaging myself from my fallen steed, sought to repair my fortune and renew the onset. My blood was up; like Juan, "though young, I was a tartar," and making for the assailant of the horseman, I resolved to arrest him on the spot.

He also had gained his feet, and was quickly hurrying from the field; but I rushed upon and forced him to turn and defend himself. Our combat was short and decisive; evading the heavy blow with which he sought to tame my vehement attack, I struck him so quickly and truly upon the head, that I fractured his skull. The fellow, staggering a few paces, fell heavily upon the greensward; his limbs quivered for a moment; and his eyes, after glaring wildly at the heavens for an instant, closed in death.

At first, I could scarcely credit what I had so valorously achieved, and almost expected my antagonist would recover, and attempt a renewal of the contest.

As I continued, however, to gaze upon his blood-stained visage, I began to feel a sort of tremor stealing over me, at, for the first time in my life, beholding a dead body at my feet,

not to mention that the unhandsome corpse I saw before me was one of my own killing.

The lonely spot in which this encounter had taken place also had its effect upon my nerves; and gladly turning from the contemplation of the body of the slain, I turned in quest of the person who had been assailed.

He, too, I perceived, was unable to rise.

Supposing that he had been stunned by the violence of the overthrow, I hastened to his assistance, and endeavoured to raise him in my arms. To my extreme terror, however, I found that he was, apparently, a corpse.

Laying him gently on the ground, I felt for the beating of his heart, tried to find his pulse, and even, in the extremity of my consternation and alarm, shook him violently, as if to awaken him from a deep sleep.

It was, however, in vain. To my horror and dismay, all my efforts at restoring him to life were unavailing. He had evidently received so violent a fall, that, being an elderly man, it had deprived him of life.

For the first few minutes I felt bewildered at this most untoward event, and as I continued gazing upon the pallid visage before me, I suddenly remembered the features as those of the proprietor of the domain to which the plantation belonged.

Sir Walter Villeroy had been personally a stranger to me, and even my permission to angle in the rivulet which meandered through his park, had recently been obtained through the intervention of our keepers.

Here, then, was a dilemma of a most unpleasant nature; as, although I had acted with the best intentions, I had evidently brought about the very catastrophe I was seeking to prevent.

It will readily be imagined that I felt considerable horror at this double slaughter. The very sun which gilded the foliage around me, and tinged the fern at my feet with his rays, seemed to shine unnaturally upon the bodies of the dead; whilst the free birds, twittering and chirping on the adjacent boughs, appeared to mock me in their joyous mood.

With dismayed glance I looked around, in the hope of some persons making their appearance in the wood, in order to relieve the solitude in which I was the only remaining actor.

I felt, indeed, as if I had committed a murder, for although I had attempted the rescue of a gentleman from the savage attack of a common cut-throat, yet, as I neither knew the exact provocation of the assault, nor whether it was upon the purse or life of the defender that the ruffian was making this attempt, I felt that I ought to have given my assistance with somewhat more discretion and less impetuosity. As these thoughts flashed through my brain, I withdrew a short distance from the vicinity of the bodies, and with some difficulty

succeeded in catching my horse. Leaping into the saddle, I felt somewhat reassured, and resolved to ride off instantly to Marston Hall, and inform the inmates of the situation of its owner. Putting spurs, therefore, to my steed, I turned my back upon the lists in which I had thus made my first essay in arms, and almost flew till I found myself in the darksome shade of the old avenue leading to the Hall, and then I drew bridle, to consider in what way I was to introduce so untoward a subject, and account for the catastrophe.

I knew nothing of the family, as they generally resided either in London, or at a seat they possessed in Gloucestershire; neither did I even know if there was wife or child of the man I had killed, to whom I was to give the necessary intelligence. Whilst I thus slackened my pace, under the shade of melancholy boughs, and approached nearer to the Hall, I suddenly came to the determination of concealing my own share in the unlucky part of this transaction. It was the resolve of the moment, and I stopped not to consider its propriety; but I felt that I was quite unable to tell the story, and name myself as the cause (even although the almost innocent cause) of the old gentleman's death.

CHAPTER II.

"O when my eyes did see Olivia first,
Methought she purg'd the air of pestilence.
That instant was I turned into a hart,
And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
E'er since pursued me."

SHAKSPEARE.

MARSTON HALL, the residence of Sir Walter Villeroy, was a noble pile. It had been built in the reign of bluff King Harry the Eighth. I have already said, I knew nothing of the present occupiers, except by name, they having but lately thought fit to remove to our neighbourhood; but oftentimes in my wanderings, I had loved to explore the precincts of a building so time-honoured and curious in architecture. I was now about to introduce myself to its inhabitants, though the unpleasant mission I found myself necessitated to undertake robbed me of any sort of curiosity or anticipated pleasure in my visit.

The stately trees of the avenue I stood in, as I dismounted in order to approach the main entrance, rendered the spot dark as twilight, and the rooks, wheeling over the topmost boughs of the stately oaks, alone disturbed the deep solitude by their incessant cawing.

As the gates were open, I entered the fore-court, which seemed deserted and melancholy. I called aloud for some one to take my horse, but no David Gellatly came capering and singing wild snatches of antique ballads, in answer to the summons. I tied my steed to one of the iron rails of the great gates which opened into the stately-looking fore-court, passed the murmuring fountain which played in its centre, ascended the flight of stone steps, and entered the hall of the mansion.

As no one yet appeared, I paused to observe the splendour of the place. Several suits of polished armour hung around, together with the trophies of the chase; pikes and guns, and bows of the olden time, also graced its walls; and the proud banners of ancestral chivalry floated from either side of its carved and gilded roof.

At any other time, the objects of interest I now beheld would have fully occupied my attention; at the present moment I felt anxious, without disturbing the family, to discover the servants of the establishment, and dispatch them to the assistance of the sometime owner of the grandeur I saw around me.

Whilst I deliberated upon the propriety of venturing farther into the interior of the mansion, or of returning to seek for some of the out-door dependants, a light step approached, the door at the farther end of the apartment opened, and a female entered, the sight of whom by no means lessened the difficulties of my situation, for she was apparently under twenty years of age, and lovely as the goddess of spring.

At first, supposing it was her father who had returned home, she came bounding towards me; but the next moment discovering her mistake, she stopped, and, looking like some inhabitant of the skies, who had suddenly alighted upon the marble floor of the hall, awaited, in some little surprise, the explanation of my intrusion.

To give that explanation, and escape an abrupt and premature disclosure of the catastrophe which had happened, required more tact, self-possession, and management than an unsophisticated and secluded rustic like myself was likely to possess. "The might, the majesty of loveliness," for the first minute, struck me dumb; the awkwardness of my situation completely perplexed me, and after muttering some incoherent excuses, so much of my secret escaped, that Miss Villeroi, guessing either that her father was killed, or had at least met with some dreadful accident, uttered a piercing cry and fell senseless upon the floor.

I now awoke the echoes of the mansion with my cries for assistance, and, lifting Miss Villeroi from the ground, gazed upon her chiselled features with the wonder of a savage who sees beauty for the first time.

In a few minutes I was surrounded by the liveried atten-

dants of the hall, and, informing them of the catastrophe which had happened, dispatched them in search of their unfortunate master, and to procure medical assistance. The alarm now quickly spreading through the mansion, its quiet was soon changed into female lamentations and outcries.

Meanwhile I placed my lovely burthen upon an outer bench on one side of the ample fireplace, and, with the assistance of her maids, tried every means I could think of to restore her to consciousness. Her long dark hair almost covering her face, nearly hid her features, as she reclined partially supported in my arms. I shaded back these tresses, sprinkled water in her face, and forgot her father and the recent drama I had helped to enact, as I continued to gaze upon her beauty.

At length, by the aid of such restoratives as were at hand, we succeeded in recovering Miss Villeroy from her death-like swoon, although only to behold her again relapse into unconsciousness, at the dreadful sight of her father's body, which was borne into the hall by the servants I had dispatched in its search.

Luckily, the medical man from the adjacent village quickly arrived. He was a shrewd and clever person, one of those eagle-eyed men who oftentimes at a single glance perceive that which would take a duller practitioner half an hour to consider. He soon found his art was of no avail, where he had first given his attendance, and stepping from the circle of domestics who crowded around Sir Walter Villeroy's prostrate body, he approached, with lancet in hand, the seat on which I still continued to support my fair charge.

"I'll relieve you of your patient, fair Sir," he said; "this is a sad business; Sir Walter Villeroy has received a concussion of the brain. He has been dead some time; I may perhaps be of more use here."

He accordingly immediately ordered the young lady to be conveyed to her chamber, and attended her removal himself. Meanwhile, after the domestics had carried the body of their late master to his apartment, I became, as harbinger of the unwelcome tidings, the next object of curiosity and cross examination. The corpse of the ruffian had been found on the spot where I had slain him. In telling the story as it had happened, I concealed, however, so much of the share which I had in the old gentleman's death as my impetuous zeal had helped to anticipate. Indeed, I considered that the crime, by this means, would only be visited upon the memory of the ruffian whom I had already placed beyond the vengeance of the law, and who, I certainly had reason to believe, would have quickly effected his purpose, had I not made my appearance upon the scene. I therefore resolved to have it supposed that he was the

actual perpetrator of the murder. Like Sir Edward Mortimer, I rounded my tale with a lie—

“Guilt’s offspring and its guard.”

From Dr. Probe I learned that Miss Villeroy was an only child, and heiress of all her father’s immense wealth; that they were unaccompanied at that time by any other members of their family, and were just on the eve of leaving England on a continental tour. He also informed me, that the ruffian who had assailed the Baronet was well known as one of the most abandoned characters in the county,—

“A fellow by the hand of nature marked,
Quoted and signed, to do a deed of shame ;”

and that Sir Walter had but lately prosecuted him for frequent trespass upon his preserves.

From these circumstances my version of the story was the more easily believed, and glad enough I felt that it was so, for to have been recognised by Miss Villeroy as the cause, although the innocent cause, of her only parent’s death, would, I felt, have led her to regard me with feelings of dislike and horror.

Dr. Probe, who was well acquainted with the family, and had been much esteemed by Sir Walter Villeroy, was a shrewd and clever man. He took upon himself whatever arrangements were requisite and necessary, on this sudden emergency, until the relatives and friends should arrive. He wrote and dispatched letters to the Earl of Marston, brother of the deceased, during the intervals of his attendance upon his lovely patient. He also dispatched an express to an elderly lady residing some thirty miles distant, also a relative of the family’s, desiring her immediate presence at the Hall, where he himself prepared to remain in constant attendance until she arrived.

I myself would fain have taken my leave, as the evening approached, but he requested me to remain, and as I felt no inclination, in reality, to leave a roof now so interesting to me, I remained there all night; and, during the intervals of his attendance upon his patient, assisted him in the office he had assumed of writing letters to the various members of the family. Her Grace the Duchess of Hurricane, I was informed, was the aunt of Miss Villeroy; she was abroad at this time, and to her, amongst others, we dispatched a letter, apprising her of the calamitous event.

CHAPTER III.

"Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies."

AS YOU LIKE IT.

It was, indeed, with feelings of no small uneasiness, that I found Dr. Probe entertained considerable apprehension in regard to his young patient. Early in the morning he had dispatched an express to the nearest town for a physician of eminence residing there, she having been delirious during the greater part of the night, and violent fever having supervened in the morning.

Although I felt the greatest anxiety on her account, and longed to stay at Marston Hall, yet, being so utterly a stranger there, after lingering on till towards the evening of this day, I then mounted my horse to return home, a changed man and a sadder than I had sallied from it in the morning previous. As I leisurely paced along I revolved in my mind the various incidents that had transpired. The reflection that, for the first time, I had deviated from the truth, weighed heavily upon me, and I could not shake it off my conscience; it seemed to press upon my heart, and to bode me evil fortune in my future career.

Our residence was called Wharncliffe Grange. It was a castellated and half monastic building, nearly hidden in the midst of luxuriant and venerable trees, surrounded by a deep moat, and approached by an ancient drawbridge. The dark waters surrounding the old building lay tranquil and sombre, as I approached; and, reflecting the lowering heavens in the twilight, black as ink, were only agitated now and again by the heavy splash of some enormous fish, which had tenanted their depths, during perhaps many generations of our family. Methought, as I paused upon the drawbridge, and contemplated my home, looking into this dark pool, whilst the night bird shrieked in the woods around, that some water spirit, some evil genius of my fortunes might be, perhaps, plotting the mischief and misfortune of my future destiny. In fact, I was somewhat troubled on that evening with "thick coming fancies," and presentiments of evil, a sort of feeling which had never before so wholly beset me.

The clatter of my horse's hoofs across the wooden bridge summoning my groom, I resigned my steed, and entered the mansion of my fathers. An ancient dame, who for years had lived in our family as a sort of housekeeper, and always took the most maternal interest in all my actions, intercepted me

as I was about to ascend to my chamber, in order to have her accustomed gossip, and inform me of all that had happened during my absence. It was my intention, after altering my dress, to have sought and conferred with my father. To my surprise, however, Mrs. Sweetapple informed me, that having been visited on the previous evening by a stranger, who had arrived from the neighbouring town, in a postchaise, and who she believed was a lawyer, my father, after some hours' conference with him, had ordered his carriage early the next morning, and both had then started off for the great metropolis.

"He has left a letter for you," continued the old dame, "in his study, which he desired you should receive, as soon as you arrived."

Proceeding to the library without delay, I perused the contents of the epistle. I learned from it, that my father unexpectedly found himself involved in a chancery suit, and having been visited by his solicitor, he had thought fit (such was the urgency of the matter) instantly to leave his home for London. He added that he should have preferred my accompanying him, and if I chose to do so, I might still follow. But he left me to pursue the bent of my own inclination in the matter, giving me the address of the hotel where he intended to remain whilst in town. I certainly did not at that moment feel any inclination to be in London. Indeed, I could not have gone at that time, had I wished it, as I expected to be summoned on the inquest, which would doubtless be held upon the bodies found in the plantation.

After the inquiry was over, I made frequent visits to Marston Hall. Indeed, I spent more time in its vicinity than at my own home. Like Roland, I "loved to breathe the neighbouring air," and the sight even of the massive Elizabethian chimneys, seen from afar, was pleasant to me to contemplate; then as the gloom of the coming night enveloped the surrounding scenery, and "the crow wing'd to the rooky wood," I would spur apace, and reach my home. Meanwhile, Miss Villeroy, after having been in considerable danger, was gradually recovering.

It was a few days after the funeral of Sir Walter Villeroy had taken place, that having, as usual, ridden over to Marston, I received a message from the servant, requesting me to alight; Mrs. Allworthy, the lady before mentioned as residing in the neighbourhood, having arrived, and being desirous of seeing me. I accordingly dismounted from my steed, and entering the hall, was ushered into the withdrawing-room, a vast apartment, extending nearly from end to end of the building. Whilst I stood at the window, waiting the coming of this lady, and contemplating the beauty of the scene before me, I beheld a travelling carriage, with four horses, sweep round the road, at

some distance in the park, and approach the mansion at full speed. As it advanced, a second vehicle, laden with an imperial and other appointments, also made its appearance.

I immediately surmised that these arrivals must be the distinguished relatives of Miss Villeroy, whom we had summoned from abroad, on the late melancholy occasion; and a shy and uncomfortable feeling unconsciously stole over me, as I watched their approach. I felt there was something irksome and disagreeable in having to introduce myself to strangers, and once or twice I almost resolved to escape before they arrived.

Recollecting, however, that Mrs. Allworthy, who was, I concluded, in the chamber of the invalid, would be likely to make her appearance before they came, which would in some measure relieve me from the awkwardness of my situation, I resolved to remain, and in a few minutes more the door of the apartment was thrown open by the servant, and in walked the portly person of the Duchess of Hurricane. A younger female accompanied her, who was extremely handsome and *distinguée* in appearance.

They advanced into the room with all that presence and dignity belonging to persons in their rank of life; and the Duchess quickly observing me, as I stood before the open window, immediately approached, slightly bowing as she did so. Being rather short-sighted, she at first took me for Dr. Probe, with whom she was slightly acquainted. On seeing, however, her error, she stopped short. The high-bred, I have observed, are always courteous, even when distant in their manners. The Duchess of Hurricane, however, was one of those persons who could freeze a forward tongue into silence by a glance. Not even the glorious Siddons, in Lady Macbeth, could be more awful when she chose. She looked her surprise for the moment, at seeing a strange youth instead of the medical attendant, whom she expected to find in the apartment; and, after a short pause, addressed me:—

“I am extremely happy to hear my niece is so much recovered,” she said. “Can you inform me if Dr. Probe is in the house; as, if unattended with danger, I should like to see Miss Villeroy immediately.”

I ventured to observe that, to the best of my belief, the doctor was at that moment in the chamber of the invalid.

The Duchess again bowed, drew herself up, and turned to address her young companion.

“So,” she said, stepping to one of the ample windows, “this, then, is Marston Hall? What think you, Constance?—rather a handsome mansion! I feel surprised, now I see it, that my brother did not oftener reside here.”

“I call it a most lovely spot, mamma,” returned Constance; “one of the most delightful places I ever beheld. Look at

those glorious old oaks in the distance yonder. One would think that, as Scott says, they must have witnessed the stately march of the Roman soldiery."

"Nay," said the Duchess, with a yawn, "if you begin again with your romance, I have done. Ring the bell, Constance, and let us summon the medical man: the people here seem all bewildered with this late untoward event."

During the short pause which now ensued I felt extremely uncomfortable. The haughty bearing of the Duchess forbade all further attempts, on my part, at conversation, and I felt confused and awkward.

At length, to my relief, Mrs. Allworthy made her appearance. After the first greetings and inquiries were over, she introduced me to the Duchess and her daughter, the Lady Constance de Clifford; and the trio soon afterwards leaving the room for the apartment of the invalid, I gladly prepared to take my departure.

As I passed through the great hall, I encountered the persons who had arrived in the second carriage; the Earl of Marston and his son, Lord Hardenbrass of the hussars. Having travelled from Venice, where Dr. Probe's letters had reached them, with the news of the late melancholy event, they were making inquiry of Haverill, the butler of the hall, into the particulars of Sir Walter Villeroy's death. I heard Haverill mention my name to them as I passed out; but feeling no desire at that time to make the acquaintance of any of the other members of the family, I mounted my horse, and rode homewards.

It was about a week after this meeting, that a servant entering the library at the Grange, as I was one morning engaged in writing to my father, delivered a couple of cards, announcing that two gentlemen were on horseback at the gate, and had desired the favour of an interview.

"Admit the gentlemen, instantly," I said; and my visitors were accordingly ushered into my presence.

The Earl of Marston was a fine specimen of the English noble of the old school. His manners were those of the polished gentleman. Perhaps he was rather too dignified; but yet so graceful in his deportment, that you invariably forgot his high rank in admiration of his pleasing address.

His son, although like his father, "a good man's picture," was in style and bearing imperious and haughty. He evidently could not forget his Norman shield. His arrogant style, indeed, belied not his disposition, since he was a kind of modern Tybalt, and being of an overbearing, fiery temper, was ready almost to fight with his own shadow. It was unlucky that a youth of this sort was destined to cross my path in life, as the association could not possibly lead to good. The old earl

seemed even himself to lie in awe of his son's irritable temper. He sought to take the lead in the conversation during this visit, and, by his professions of service, to do away with the contemptuous and rude manners of his companion.

"I have great pleasure, Mr. Blount," he commenced, "in making the acquaintance of the son of an old friend. Your father I had the pleasure of knowing in America, whilst he commanded the —th dragoons. We served together during a campaign there, and a better soldier, or more estimable man never existed. Indeed, it has been my especial loss that, for many years we have not met. Permit me to introduce my son, Lord Hardenbrass."

Lord Hardenbrass made a sort of motion, which he perhaps intended for a bow, stared impudently in my face, but uttered no word of greeting.

"We have called to return you thanks, Mr. Blount," continued the Earl, taking the seat I offered him, "for your display of gallantry, on the late melancholy occasion. Your kindness also to Miss Villeroy, and the attention you have offered since that unhappy affair, merit our warmest acknowledgments. We are also the bearers of a message from the Duchess of Hurricane, who, I believe, has already had the pleasure of making your acquaintance. She desires me to say that, although at present she receives few visitors at Marston, she will feel obliged by your favouring her with a call at your earliest convenience."

During this visit, two things more especially annoyed me: the one was, that I was necessitated to recapitulate, even to its minutest particular, the late untoward rencontre; the other was the very marked and contemptuous bearing of my younger visitor. Sprung from ancestry, time-honoured as his own, I could ill brook the hauteur with which he bore himself, and in any other circumstances, I should doubtless have returned the scorn it was his pleasure to treat me with. At the present time, however, I felt rebuked in mine own esteem; the sort of lie I had been obliged to round my story with, in regard to the death of his relative, kept me in some measure within bounds, and I felt humbled; added to which the strong love I bore his cousin made a tame snake of me.

As it was, however, that "cankered hate," which is oftentimes felt by two persons towards each other, at first sight; that "pernicious rage" which, like the animosity of Montague and Capulet, was only to be quenched "with purple fountains issuing from our veins," was first engendered during this visit; and notwithstanding the conciliatory address and pleasing manners of the old earl, and my own caution in regard to taking offence from his son, we parted on terms so distant, that I felt I had almost commenced a quarrel with a member of

the family with which I most wished to be on terms of friendship.

CHAPTER IV.

“ There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries :
On such full sea are we now afloat ;
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”

SHAKSPEARE.

IN a few days, I visited the Duchess as she had desired. I was received by her with great civility, and she made her acknowledgments to me for the services I had rendered. The fair Constance, her daughter, who was, indeed, a lovely creature, treated me with marked kindness, and had I not before seen her cousin, I should, doubtless, have been captivated by the sweetness of her manners and her beauty.

During one or two visits subsequently made, I saw only the Lady Constance, the Duchess not making her appearance ; and we quickly grew more intimately acquainted. On calling one morning, I found this young lady about to walk in the pleasure grounds of the hall, whither she invited me to accompany her. Indeed, I had every reason to feel highly complimented by the marked kindness with which she invariably treated me.

The pleasure grounds and gardens of Marston were quite in the old style and in keeping with the antiquity of the mansion. Nothing, even without doors, had been modernised ; a specimen of good taste not often to be observed in these latter times. The extensive gardens resembled a scene in one of Watteau's pictures, where we see the *dramatis personæ*, with their carpets spread under the shade of melancholy boughs, the guitar tinkling, the flask passing merrily round, and the song, the jest, and the roar of mirth, filling the circumambient air, whilst here and again, half hidden in the leafy screen of some verdant alley, is to be partially seen a gentle swain whispering the lady of his heart, and apparently, by her glance of love, not whispering in vain.

Here, then, in such lovely retreat, I accompanied the beautiful Lady Constance de Clifford. We appeared to have become as intimately acquainted as if we had been friends from childhood. Constance was a great lover of the old poets, whose beauties afforded us an endless theme of conversation. Had I but returned the feelings of interest she regarded me with at

this time, and sought her love, I should, perhaps, have met a better fate than I have since experienced. But, insensible of her excellence and beauty, I treated her marked preference with neglect.

"Come," said Constance, looking round, as I stood regarding the distant mansion, and trying to identify the particular window which belonged to the chamber of the invalid: "one would suppose you an admirer of Miss Villeroy, you seem so wrapt and lost in contemplation of her lattice. We shall have you, guitar in hand, serenading there, I suppose, ere long—

‘ To beauty shy, by lattice high,
Sings high-born cavalier,’

But beware of that, Sir Cavalier; my cousin, who, you may have heard, hath store of rose nobles in her coffers, will live to be as old as Sybilla, unless she be obtained by the manner of her father's will, like Portia. Doubtless the four winds would have blown in from every coast renowned suitors; and, indeed, I might go on and tell you that many Jasons have come in quest of one so fair, but that she has been for some time engaged to a gentleman, whom I believe you have once met—Lord Marston's son—and he is not a man to endure a rival; he is the very 'butcher of a silk button.' We shall have swords out, and tilting at each other's breasts in fine style, if you but look upon his lady bright with an eye of admiration."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, stopping short; "Lord Hardenbrass, then, is the lover of Miss Villeroy? and is he, think you, beloved again?"

With all my endeavour at carelessness in the question, I could hardly conceal my interest. Lady Constance paused, and looked at me.

"That's an odd question," she said, "but I will answer it as bluntly. I do not think that Isabella cares much for Lord Hardenbrass; his manners are haughty and overbearing, and he is too much wrapped up in his own self-conceit to take the trouble of trying to gain her affections. They have been engaged, I think, ever since she left school, so that he has never found it necessary to play the devoted slave and servant in his wooing, feeling, as he does, so very secure of her fair self and broad lands, without the effort."

"But how," I observed, "did she become thus engaged, since I think you have satisfactorily proved that she cares nothing for him?"

"Why," she returned, "it was her father's wish; he had so entirely set his mind upon this match, and she so doated on her parent, that had he urged her to engage herself to Mephistophelis, she would scarce, I think, have said him nay; and young as she was, when the engagement was made, she cared

little about the matter. The baronet, I have heard, has left it in his will, that unless she marries Lord Hardenbrass, the greater part of his immense property will go to a nephew now in India. His will, indeed, directly expresses the wish that, by her becoming Lady Hardenbrass, and joining in wedlock, the adjoining estates in Gloucestershire should also be made one. Fathers have flinty hearts, Mr. Blount, in these matter o' money jointures. She will, therefore, in all probability, be one day Countess of Marston. But I know not," she observed, stopping suddenly, "why I am thus telling you all our family affairs: you are so very lately known to us. Nay, indeed, except to myself, I can hardly say you are known at all; for by those members of our family, to whom you have been thus introduced by adverse circumstances, you are not liked: that is to say," she continued, seeing me stop abruptly and in displeasure, "you are not, I think, properly appreciated. For my own part, I consider myself a more penetrating person than many of our house, and able to pierce the windows of the human breast, somewhat quicker than either my mother the duchess, who oftentimes takes most unconquerable aversions at sight, or any of the rest of the family. They are, I should say, impenetrable themselves, rather than the penetrators of the hearts of others."

In this lively strain, the Lady Constance continued the conversation, whilst we strolled about the gardens of the hall.

"I am, as you may perceive," she said, "a sort of Diana Vernon in manners, and utter whatever I think at the moment without dread of being considered, by such freedom, bold or unlady-like."

From the gardens, we walked into the shrubberies of the hall, which extended for many miles around the domain, and it was somewhat late when we returned from our ramble. My companion was rather alarmed, with all her boasted heedlessness of control, when she found how much old Time had been a winner during our promenade, and that she would be most likely questioned by the duchess.

During this day's promenade, I discovered, from the conversation of my lively companion, that by her family, although so little known, I was not much liked, but merely tolerated from the supposed service I had rendered. Uncertain fancy! the bare supposition galled me. On the heart of Lady de Clifford however, the overweening vanity of youth led me to think I had already made some slight impression.

Had it so happened that at this period I had received my commission, I should perhaps have escaped ever again renewing my acquaintance with the inmates of Marston Hall, and, thereby avoided much unhappiness. Indeed, after this conversation with Lady de Clifford, I half resolved to leave my home

and join my father in London ; but such resolve required more firmness of purpose than a youth of my years was likely to possess, and eventually gave place to the desire of again being in the company, if but for once more, of Miss Villeroy. Added also, to that fatal longing, was the circumstance of my father having constituted me, in his absence, the manager of those affairs which required the personal eye of a master in superintending, and which, indeed, made it a matter of absolute duty for me to remain at the Grange. I, therefore, did remain, and became more and more entangled in the meshes of a hopeless passion for the mistress of Marston Hall.

Meanwhile, Miss Villeroy had been repeatedly urged by the duchess to accompany her to Scotland : but as she raised many objections to the journey, and begged to remain in solitude till she had a little recovered her spirits, after some considerable controversy on the duchess's part, it was settled that Mrs. Allworthy should remain with her, together with Lady de Clifford, whilst the duchess herself visited the north. These matters I learned afterwards, for it was some little time, owing to several short journeys I found myself obliged to take on business, before I was again a visitor of my new friends.

When I next was ushered into the drawing-room of the hall, I found myself, for the second time, in the company of the beautiful creature, who, from the first glance, had made so deep an impression on my imagination. At first I thought she looked uneasy in my presence, my name being evidently associated in her mind with the horrible catastrophe of which I had been the harbinger. This, however, wore off, and she became less reserved in manner, whilst I staid. Mrs. Allworthy was present during my visit, and Lady de Clifford, fully accoutred in riding gear, was about to proceed to the little post-town, some five miles distant, on a trifling commission for her friend. When, therefore, her horse was announced, I offered to be her escort.

Mounted upon the beautiful animal she rode, Constance appeared to the greatest advantage ; she was a perfect horsewoman, and as bold as her spirited steed. Behold me, then, brought out under these pleasant auspices ; from a secluded youth, who, since childhood, had been kept from mixing with his equals, and who had, therefore, lived in a world of his own creation, I at once became the intimate companion of some such creations as I had been wont to imagine in my Shaksperian dreams. Had I, indeed, suddenly found myself transported into Arden, consorting the witty Rosalind, or contemplating the beauty of the radiant Olivia, I could not have been more happily situated, or have found two beings so nearly approaching to those fair creations of the poet's brain.

The fair Constance putting her steed into a gallop, I rode

like a true esquire ever at her bridle rein. In this part of Yorkshire, the scenery is wild, but very beautiful; that pleasant and lively watering-place, Harrowgate, is not far distant. Sometimes we galloped across a bleak looking and extensive common, and then again we drew bridle and breathed our horses, where the sandy road was on either side shaded with the fragrant pine.

Whilst we thus rode together, and I listened to the lively conversation of my companion, and gazed on her animated and glowing countenance, with her beautiful tresses streaming in the wind, I felt that it was even possible to be in love with two beings, although so different, at the same time. Indeed, there was something so spirited and noble, and yet so gentle, in the bearing of this young lady, and the pride of conscious virtue made her apparently so perfectly independent of control, that it was impossible to be long in her society and not her admirer.

As we galloped across one of those open wastes or commons I have mentioned, a horseman suddenly appeared from the pine-shadowed road, towards which we were crossing, and the quick eye of the lady descried her relative, Lord Hardenbrass. He came forward at the gallop, and pulled up when he reached us. Shaking his cousin by the hand, he bowed slightly to me; indeed, the very sight of me seemed to "puddle his clear spirit."

"You seem to have ridden hard, Constance," he said, "and you have I see mounted Cottager to-day. I thought Isabella allowed no person to ride my present but herself."

"Then you thought wrong, Sir Knight," she returned, laughing, "as, alas the day! you so often manage to do. But we have not had the honour of your society, my Lord, for some time: may I ask where you have been sojourning of late?"

"I have been staying at Riverdale for the last week," he answered: "and I this morning started early to gallop over and see Isabella; I return again to-morrow for a few days, and then, my leave being up, I rejoin my regiment at Nottingham. In return for all this," he continued, turning his horse and riding close beside Lady de Clifford, "may I beg the favour of a few words with you?"

"Sir, a whole history," replied the lively Constance, "though I utterly detest all cross-examination," she added, stopping her horse, "and I know well by the look of your countenance that you are about to be inquisitive."

"I must speak with you alone, Constance," he said, taking her horse's rein in his hand, and leading her forwards.

As they proceeded slowly on, I reined up my horse, in order to be out of hearing of their conference. Lord Hardenbrass, it was easy for me to perceive, was by no means pleased at

finding me the escort of his cousin, and his communication, whatever it might be, I felt pretty sure had reference to myself. It apparently, however, made little or no impression on my lovely friend, and as their vehement debate drew near its conclusion, I could not help observing the scorn, which looked beautiful in the contempt and anger of her lip.

"You have spoken your speech," I could hear her say, "and heard my reply. Farewell, my lord, I stay no further question."

She glanced round to me as she said this, and I was quickly at her side; shaking then the reins of her steed, we left his lordship, apparently in a most unpleasant state of ill-temper and annoyance. I did not, indeed, myself feel in the most amiable disposition after this meeting. The interruption of one disagreeable and ill-conditioned guest will oftentimes mar the feast, or spoil a whole party's pleasure. As it was, this second interview with Lord Hardenbrass served to augment the fixed hate we had both, at first sight, taken to each other. As for Lady de Clifford, although she had carried it with a high hand in his presence, she evidently feared her fiery relative, and during the remainder of our ride she never once alluded to this meeting with him, nor even mentioned his name.

CHAPTER V.

"Matter deep and dangerous;
As full of peril, and advent'rous spirit,
As to o'er-walk a current, roaring loud,
On the unsteadfast footing of a spear."

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN we reached the little village of Monkspath, I found that my companion's horse had cast a shoe. We, therefore, dismounted, and resigning the steeds to the groom, desired him to seek for a farrier and have him shod.

"You will find us," said Lady de Clifford to the servant, "either at the mercer's shop in the village, or beside the old ruin on the Harrowgate road. I know you are fond of antiquities, and a lover of the picturesque, Mr. Blount," she said to me, "so we may just as well stroll onwards, after I have made my purchases, as remain in this somewhat dirty little town."

The hamlet had once evidently been tributary to the frowning castle she had alluded to, and together we strolled through its straggling street. When Constance had made her purchases at the shop she had mentioned, we clambered over the ruinous wall of the park in which the fortress was situated,

crossed over what had once been the bed of the castle lake, now, alas! but a rushy swamp, and made our way towards the old building.

Constance regained her high spirits, which had been somewhat dashed by our previous rencontre; and her laugh of perfect enjoyment once more returned, as I assisted her over the rough ground we traversed; which assistance, owing to her long riding-habit, she was glad to avail herself of occasionally. I felt, indeed, as if in the company of a dearly loved sister; nay, perhaps, I felt even more than that, for I, at this time, hardly knew the feelings of my own heart. I was greatly fascinated with so exquisite a creature, and yet devotedly in love with another. As Orlando says, I had even before me, "a Rosalind, of a better leer than her;" and yet I felt that I could have willingly died to have saved her from harm.

I question if a finer creature than Lady Constance de Clifford, after her own style of beauty, lived. Her faultless form was shown to the greatest advantage in the habit she wore, and with the glow of perfect health in her cheek, it would be difficult to picture a more dangerous companion for an unsophisticated youth like myself. When, also, it is remembered, what a lovely spot we were sauntering in; the park-like forest scene, with its hundreds of stunted oaks, and the frowning castle near at hand, and withal, that my companion was high-born, being the daughter of a noble duke, and that this park and these domains, together with the worm-eaten hold of ragged stone we were approaching, had once been part of the feudal possessions of her ancestors, and that their Norman shield was to be found, carved in at least a hundred places upon its walls and chambers; that she was fair as the most lovely of her line, and highly endowed; and that she took care to let me see the good figure of a companion, whose quarterings were as time-honoured as those of her own family, and whose lively conversation was not altogether lost upon her, it will be wondered that I could possibly help becoming distractedly in love with her, and her alone;—but it was not so. The very consciousness of her regarding me with interest and favour, kept down my growing admiration for this superior being, which has oftentimes since surprised me. For the very recollection of her, in after times, has made me love her far more than when I was her intimate friend and companion. Such, alas! is the state of man, to one thing constant never: an after-life of continual meditations might oftentimes be spent in considering the wilful mistakes and headstrong misconduct, during our progress from eighteen to five-and-twenty.

Often have I passed whole hours, when, unfriended, I have stood a lonely sentinel in a foreign land, like some hired cut-throat in a bad cause. Yes, often by the loopholed and

grated walls of a Spanish convent, a solitary sentinel, I have almost neglected to challenge the rounds during the watches of the night, whilst thinking over each expression and beautiful action of Constance de Clifford, in those brief but happy hours.

We continued to amuse ourselves in examining the old tower, and imagining it in its palmy days, now picturing to ourselves the scenes of splendour and gaiety which had there been oftentimes enacted, and then again the bustle of the feudal Baron's everyday existence. We fancied how those walls were once manned and garrisoned—the stables filled with steeds and their attendants, whilst the halls and chambers, “braying with minstrelsy,” looked a sea of waving plumes. We imagined the strict watch and ward, when contention and civil butchery had broken loose in the land; saw the men at arms and knights of old paraded in battle array, together with the pride and circumstance of their chivalrous bearing, and the gallant appointments and appearance of each horse and armour that filed past.

The Lady Constance, like myself, loved to emancipate herself from this “work-a-day world,” when interested in such themes. She seated herself on a green mound of the shattered ruin, and under the shade of the ivy, which covered the flanking towers of the building, we talked of the good old times, till we could almost have wept over the degenerate age of mediocrity in which we were living actors.

“You live too late, Lady de Clifford,” I exclaimed, as I reclined on the slope of the hillock she was sitting upon, and gazed upon her flashing eye; “you ought to have lived in the times you describe so well; in the days of Acre and Ascalon; the days of tilt and tourney. Your very look is that of some inhabitant of such a castle as the one before us, for whose smile whole squadrons of mail-clad knights would have encountered the shock of the listed field.”

“Good Heavens,” she returned, laughing, “what a peerless heroine I must be! Then, let me see, how I am to return so flattering a compliment. Shall I say it was that very indescribable and incomprehensible look which first caused me to regard you with curiosity, as the perfect resemblance in feature and bearing of one of the knights errant of former days. There was a touch of Don Quixote de la Mancha about you that was highly interesting, something between the Don and a light dragoon of the present day; a most worthy specimen of one of those doughty heroes, who were fain to go vagabondizing about from one end of the country to the other. I assure you I did not rest till I had inquired who that tall, dark, melancholy-looking Hidalgo was; and when I heard of your adventure in that unhappy affair of my uncle's death, I determined to patronise you as a worthy descendant of those champions of whom it is my peculiar delight to read.”

Pleasant as the first part of this good-humoured sally was, the allusion to my unlucky deeds gave me a pang "sharp as the stiletto of the Portuguese," and I felt so far from being one of those worthies *sans peur et sans reproche*, that I looked upon myself as an impostor, who feared to utter the truth.

"But I marvel," continued my companion, rising and looking round, "what keeps the knave groom so long with our horses; let us return to the village and meet him. I know not how it is with you, Mr. Blount, but whenever I am in the vicinity of such a record of former days as this, I always feel a sort of fascination to the spot, and cannot, without an effort, tear myself away. Methinks the spirits of my sires, venerable and grave-looking, sigh in the gale, and glide about the dark and ruined shell. Look at that 'high, upreared, and abutting front'—within the apartment with the vast fire-place and cavernous chimney, 'tis said a beautiful woman, the wife of a De Clifford, was foully done to death. What immense interest doth that legend give to each mouldering stone of the ruined tower! Here, perhaps, in this wing, 'the night-shriek disturbed the curtain'd sleep,'

'And wither'd murder
Alarmed by his sentinel the wolf
Towards his design, mov'd like a ghost.'

How pleasant, too, to contemplate the lovely landscape around, whilst 'light thickens,' as Shakspeare so beautifully words it, 'and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood.'

I felt the same unwillingness to leave this interesting scene, with so delightful a guide to point out its beauties, and we examined afresh each loophole and embrasure of the building, before we consented to quit it. As we did so, a loud and wild halloo saluted our ears from the road; and we beheld, in the distance, two or three dozen men, armed with pitchforks and bludgeons, rushing towards us. In a few minutes the meaning of this rout was apparent, for down an undulation of the ground (his ascent up the other side of which had till then hidden his approach) came, with the speed of a racehorse, an enormous and ferocious mastiff. The appearance of the brute in an instant showed that he was raving mad.

Constance, who happened to be somewhat in front, stopped suddenly, looked round, and turned deadly pale, appearing unable to move a step from the spot on which she stood. The mastiff was, indeed, close upon her, and there seemed no hope of escape from a fate the most horrible to be conceived; for my part I was also sufficiently alarmed. I held a hunting-whip in my hand, but felt it was perfectly useless against this monster in a rabid state. Like lightning I stripped off my coat, and wrapping it round my right arm and hand, rushed upon the

animal as he was about to spring upon my companion. I was so nearly too late although I had done this in an instant, that as I struck the dog with my muffled fist, throwing my whole weight into the blow, he was scarcely a foot from her throat. The dog went over with the buffet, and the next moment we were grappling together in deadly combat: a mortal conflict upon rather unequal terms, since the one party, even if the vanquisher, must come off without scratch or wound in the struggle, or he would share the fate of the beast he was destroying. I felt this at the moment, and I felt, moreover, that the beautiful Constance, should I fail in destroying the rabid mastiff, would also be his victim. Throwing myself upon the dog before he could gain his feet, with both hands I seized him by the throat, and disengaging myself from the coat, held him firmly in my grasp.

Man is immensely powerful in his arms when in such a position; and notwithstanding the strength of this enormous brute, I held him securely beneath me. Whilst his eyes almost started from their sockets, with my deadly gripe, and with mouth wide open he turned from side to side in his endeavours to tear my hands and arms. Indeed, I began to doubt my capability of holding him much longer, for I found myself growing exhausted with the violence and duration of this death-grapple.

I turned my head, Lady de Clifford was close beside me: horror depicted in her countenance.

"Lady de Clifford," I cried, "search the pocket of my coat for a knife. We must end this struggle instantly or we are lost."

Whilst she searched for the knife, I looked to the front in order to see our chance of succour: the pursuers were still some distance from us. I cared not for myself, could I but save my companion. Constance was fortunate in finding the knife, with which she flew to my side. I bade her, as I ventured to grasp it, to fly, and gain the shelter of the ruin, before I made my last effort, and used this dagger of mercy upon my deadly foe.

"Never!" she exclaimed; "I will not leave you."

There was no time to urge it: but gradually getting a tighter grasp on the brute's windpipe with my left hand, I suddenly quitted him with my right, seized the knife, and plunged it into his throat. The blood spouted over me as I held him for a few moments longer, and then his strength was gone for ever. I threw him from me, and setting my foot upon his neck, once more reached the knife, and plunged it into his heart. All was then over, and the animal, horrible in death, but no longer dangerous, lay quivering before us.

Constance leading the way down the slope upon which the

castle was built, towards a beautiful stream which wound round the hillock, herself assisted in washing the blood from my hands and arms. I had received neither bite or wound, and she returned thanks to Heaven for our escape. Drawing a diamond ring from her finger, she presented it to me.

"Wear this," she said, "in remembrance of one whom you have saved from a fate too dreadful to contemplate."

That ring I have never parted with: in prosperity I have held it sacred, and it has been a talisman which when disgusted with life, and surrounded by the vicious and profligate, I have loved to look on, and become reconciled to a world containing the being who once owned it. In misery and sickness, when a half-naked wretch, I was dragged out amidst the dead from the convent cell, where, neglected we had been left to die of typhus fever in Spain, that ring was still with me.

Constance, now that the danger was past, looked faint and ill. I saw she made an effort and controlled the faintness she felt approaching; she, however, was obliged to support herself by leaning on my arm. As I found her getting really unable to walk, I seated her on the bank and sprinkled water in her face. Who can blame me if I ventured to kiss the hand she proffered me? Perhaps she was angry at the liberty, or perchance the water from the brook recovered her, for the colour mounted to her cheek and she arose.

I assisted her up the hillock to look for our horses, as she said she felt sufficiently recovered to proceed home. By the time we had again reached the scene of our exploit, the villagers had arrived and were crowding round the prostrate dog. Several came towards us when we appeared, and amongst them our groom. All had been dreadfully alarmed, supposing that we had been torn almost to pieces: and my escape they considered scarcely less than miraculous.

"Look here," exclaimed a great burley fellow, the smith of the village, thrusting out a bar of iron, "see the power of yon dog; when he fastened on th' oss, and I rammed the iron into his jaws, red hot as it was, he held it fast as if it had been a paunch, instead of a red hot coulter."

This was a fact, for the dog having run into the smith's forge, and fastened on the horse I had ridden, held him in his gripe, and what with the plunging of the frightened animal and the fear of the dog, all assembled had rushed from the forge, except the master smith, who, snatching a red hot bar of iron from the fire, thrust it into the dog's mouth and forced him to quit his hold.

The groom now informing us of my horse being wounded, I ordered him to have it killed, and then to procure a hack, and follow us home. We accordingly walked forward, and meeting a boy with Lady de Clifford's horses, once more mounted. As it was now growing late, we rode quickly homewards.

"You have lost your charger, Mr. Blount," she observed, with a smile. "The horse you are now upon is my own riding horse, and which I this day ordered the groom to mount, as he has been out of work lately; will you accept him in place of the one you rode? A poor gift considering the service you have rendered."

Her quivering voice and soft eye spoke the feelings of her grateful heart, more than the gift she offered, or the thanks she uttered. I saw her in safety to the door of the hall. Lord Hardenbrass was standing before it, apparently awaiting her return. He stepped forward to assist her in dismounting. Before she did so, she put out her hand, grasped mine, and bade me adieu:

"Will you come to us to-morrow?" said she. "I have much to be grateful for, but I cannot speak my thanks now."

I promised to do so, and alighting from her steed, she vanished into the house. I lifted my hat to the young nobleman, who stood observing us; but he either did not see, or would not return the salutation.

When I gained the turn in the road, which led me to the lodge, I wheeled round, in order to take my accustomed look at the hall, and could just distinguish my fair companion standing at her chamber-window. She retired when she saw me stop: but I felt that I had made an impression on her heart, which, at that time, it was far from my intention or wish to form there.

I was now, as may be surmised, a frequent and cherished guest at Marston. My Lord Hardenbrass, who could never, it seems deny himself enjoyment of the present moment, and whose party of young friends were awaiting him at Hareward, was off to join them there, when I arrived at Marston next day, and I, therefore, for that time, found no interruption to the delight of mixing with my new and fascinating friends. I appeared, indeed, to have become transplanted into another world, where all was new and beautiful. How, alas! can I describe those few happy days in my existence, too happy to last—

"Still 'tis pleasure tho' 'tis mixed with pain,
To think on joys that ne'er can live again."

We were now often joined in our excursions by Miss Villeroy; and Mrs. Allworthy, her relative, seemed quite content to allow both the young ladies to be escorted occasionally in their walks and rides, by one who, she said, had proved himself capable of protecting them through the most dangerous of adventures.

One day, as we were riding together in the direction of the Grange, Constance again reverted to our old dwelling, whose turrets ~~for~~ could just see above the thick woods in the distance.

"You cannot think," said she, "how much I should like to see the interior of that curious looking home of yours."

I assured them of the pleasure such a visit would give me, and, provided they could gain the sanction of their chaperone, Mrs. Allworthy, they promised to fix a day in the week to drive over.

It was now more than a month since I had received any communication from my father, which struck me as singular. My time, however, was spent so delightfully, that I felt unwilling to imagine anything could be amiss, whilst I myself was happy. Not having, therefore, lately received any communication from him, I neglected, from day to day, to write.

On the day fixed upon, Miss Villeroy and her party arrived at the Grange. Mrs. Allworthy drove over in her carriage, the young ladies came on horseback.

As I knew how greatly it would delight visitors of the disposition of my fair friends to be admitted to a place so curious and antique with all the honours, I made every effort to receive them in proper form. Rooms, therefore, which had been closed up and untenanted for nearly a century, were thrown open; old articles of furniture routed out and put in requisition; unscoured armour hung upon the walls, and even some old falconets were mounted upon the battlements and fired as my visitors approached. The old bridge too, which, for many years, had been allowed to rest quietly across the waters of the moat at the principal entrance, was, on this occasion, made to do duty, in order that every proper form might be gone through, and my guests admitted in feudal style.

Mrs. Allworthy I have but slightly noticed in this story. She was, however, well worthy of a more particular description than I have space to afford her. She was a spinster of nearly fourscore years of age, extremely eccentric in manners, and what the world would call an oddity. Active and sprightly as a girl of eighteen, she was diminutive and rather deformed in figure, while her features were by no means handsome. As it was her whim, moreover, to dress point device in the costume of the preceding century, she looked a perfect caricature. Full of talent, very satirical, and never hesitating to give her thoughts tongue, she could be a bitter scourge to ill-conditioned or presumptuous persons, whilst to those whom she liked, she was a delightful companion. "Her memory was a mine," and mistress of most modern languages she appeared to have studied every poet that had ever penned a stanza.

With so amusing a companion to chaperone the young ladies, and who could readily enter into all our feelings of romance, the hours flew swiftly, and my guests were delighted with all they saw.

Wharnccliffe Grange was one of those curious old buildings, the very traces of which are now almost obliterated from the face of the country, and the foundations of massive walls, scarcely to be traced in the green mounds that mark their site, are all that remain to tell of their whereabouts. Like many other edifices before the times of the Tudors, it contained three moats, the principal one washed the walls of the main building, another surrounded the farm buildings, whilst a third encircled the ancient garden of the establishment, so that the dark waters, overshadowed in some places by the frowning walls of the edifice, and in others by luxuriant willows, (which, hanging over the banks, showed their hoar leaves in the glassy stream), gave it the appearance of one of those old châteaux which we meet with in a Flemish picture.

After viewing the pleasure-grounds and gardens, we returned to the house, and spent some time in rambling over it. Scarcely a room escaped the curiosity of Mrs. Allworthy, so great was the interest she displayed in examining a building so curious and antique. In the long oak-panelled gallery hung many of the portraits of my ancestors. With one old picture Mrs. Allworthy was especially taken.

"This gloomy-looking individual, with the peaked beard, and the long rapier," said the old lady, "I am quite sure has some dismal legend attached to him. The picture reminds me of one I used to see in early days, when I visited Horace Walpole: it possesses an evil eye. See, Constance, like the portrait of Lord Falkland, go to what part of the gallery you will, the eyes are still upon you."

"You are quite right, madam," said the old housekeeper, who had accompanied us through the rooms, and who dearly loved to expatiate upon the virtues and gallantry of the grim figures which adorned their walls. "You are quite right, madam, that picture has a story attached to it, which is extremely curious: it is the portrait of Sir Herbert Blount, who was savagely murdered during the civil wars of Charles the First, by a party of Oliver Cromwell's dragoons."

"Delightful!" said the old lady. "I knew I was right; the face of that cavalier is as a book, 'where men may read strange matters;' there's battle, murder, and sudden death in every feature. For my part, I will not dine till I hear the story of his life. Come, Mr. Blount, with your sanction, we will sit in the recess of this window, and hear the history."

The young ladies had been much delighted with the garrulous housekeeper, who was almost as great an original in appearance and feature as some of the portraits she loved to speak of. They accordingly seconded Mrs. Allworthy's re-

quest, and seating themselves in one of the deep recesses of a window which beetled over the moat, as the sun streamed through the many-coloured panes upon the oaken floor of the gallery, they listened to a fearful tale exemplifying the horrors of civil war during the reign of Charles the First.

CHAPTER VI.

“More matter for a May morning.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE strange and eventful tale the housekeeper favoured us with greatly interested my fair friends, and furnished them with subject of discussion whilst refreshments were served.

We took our repast *al fresco*, under the shade of melancholy boughs, spreading our cloth upon the grass, and cooling our flasks in the stream of a fountain, which played melodiously in a grotto close beside us. In short, I endeavoured to entertain my guests in fitting style. Lady de Clifford and Mistress Allworthy were in high spirits, and although a shade of sadness still remained upon the brow of Miss Villeroy, our united efforts almost succeeded in banishing it. As for myself, I felt free as the bird in the air, and that, perhaps, is one of the highest enjoyments we mortals can hope for. The fool of romance, I lived upon a smile, and flustered with bright champagne, and the brighter glances of beauty, I rhapsodized about shadowy groves and unfrequented glens, Rosalind, Jacques, and Orlando, till my guests must have thought me a fit subject for Bedlam.

As I gazed into the glassy stream, on the banks of which the cousins reclined, and which mirrored features so beautiful, I even ventured to extemporize some stanzas, and, I fear, sung them to my guitar.

“Ah,” said I, as I preluded upon the instrument, “this is, indeed, true enchantment, ladies; and when, deprived of your society, I turn from the colours which the Claude glass breathes upon the scene, to the nakedness of the scene itself—

“Time trifles not with grace like thine,
Care crouches, conquered by thy gaze,
On lips so loving—so divine,
Pain never preys!

“The lustrous eyes, that largely show
Thy passing feelings’ light and shade,
Now darkly melt—now dazzling glow,
Each thought betrayed;

- "Thy cheek, where morning's rosy light
Enchanted sleeps on softest snows,
And bloom eternal o'er its bright
Perfection glows ;
- "The triumph of thy loveliness,
When each full charm asserts its right
Like stars that crowd in heaven to bless
The birth of night ;
- "All prove, if proof were wanting now,
All tell, if truth alone may tell,
How beats each heart—how burns each brow,
Beneath thy spell !
- "And yet how vain, how more than vain,
Each thought that madly clings to thee !
So, beauty breeds too surely pain,
Love—misery.'
- "And such their fate, whose daring eyes
Have gazed on what they ne'er forget.
Yet who can glance at Paradise
And feel regret ?
- "Not I ! One glimpse of charms like thine
Thou fairer far than Fancy's child,
Would fill my breast with peace divine,
However wild.
- "However racked my heart before,
One glance at thee repose would bring,
Though after-thoughts (when stilled its roar)
Might leave a sting.
- "A sting that lives till life's last groan,
A pang that parts not but with breath,
That me thy beauty bears alone
An earlier death !"

"Hang there my verse, in witness of my love," said Mrs. Allworthy, rising, and glancing at Miss Villeroy. "We are much bounden to you for your excellent music, Mr. Blount. I knew not that you were poet as well as philosopher. This cool retreat you have chosen for us here is so delightful, that it requires an effort to leave it. You could not have given us a greater treat. I quite agree with the old poet—

- 'Give me a morsel on the greensward rather,
Coarse as you will the cooking—let the fresh spring
Bubble, beside my napkin.
Your prison feasts I like not.'

But come, I think you said you had ordered your pony phaeton, to show us some of the beauties of your park here. We are like the lawyers in vacation, ladies—we see not how time moves."

As Mrs. Allworthy wished much to view Berrywell Chase, the scene mentioned in the story we had heard, as that of the overthrow of the Cromwellian troopers, it was arranged that Lady de Clifford should drive her to it, whilst I myself escorted Miss Villeroy, on a Shetland pony, in the same direction, and we accordingly took our way along the avenue.

The avenue of Wharncliffe Grange would in itself deserve a chapter. It consisted of a grove of oaks, each mossed tree of which, seeming to have outlived the eagle; and the branches meeting over head, threw so deep a shade over the delicious carpet we traversed, that it was dark as twilight.

The reader will readily imagine the feelings I experienced whilst the companion of Miss Villeroy in this sylvan retreat. The deep silence and old world look of the place, the solitude of the scene, together with the excitement, and the champagne I had swallowed in drinking healths to my fair guests, made it exceedingly difficult for me to refrain from throwing myself at the feet of one who appeared the goddess of the grove, and pouring out all my vows of everlasting love and admiration in her astonished ear.

It was the first time I had found myself thus situated, alone, with the fair empress of my soul. For although she had ordered the attendance of Miss Starch, her lady's maid, who, mounted upon the fellow Shetland to the one her mistress was riding, followed us at some little distance, I considered her presence no more an interruption to our tête-à-tête, than that of the rooks which cawed overhead.

My shyness had considerably evaporated; I was improving wonderfully under the influence of so much beauty. The might, the majesty of loveliness, which had at first awed me, now rendered me eloquent, and I amused Miss Villeroy with a whole litany of impertinence descriptive of love in the golden age, when men lived upon acorns, and the business of life consisted in playing on pipes of corn, and versing love to amorous Phillidas.

My companion was greatly diverted with my efforts at entertaining her, and I was on the point of giving utterance to the feelings of my heart, when her eye fell upon the diamond ring which Lady de Clifford had presented to me after the adventure of the mad dog.

It was evident that Constance, in telling her the story of that action, had concealed so much of it, as pertained to the jewel she had given me.

"Was it customary in your golden age, Mr. Blount," she said, archly, "for the swains to make love to more than one nymph at a time?"

There was something of pique, I thought, in the tone of her voice as she said this.

"This ring, Miss Villeroy," I said, in answering the expression of her eye. "This ring was——"

"My gift," she said, interrupting me, "to my cousin Constance. I thought she prized it."

"Dear, as her finger," I returned, "doubtless she did so; but it was given to me under peculiar circumstances. Sweet ornament, that once decked a thing divine. I value it tenfold more, Miss Villeroy, since you say it was yours. O, Sylvia, Sylvia," I continued, kissing the ring like some stage-struck hero making his *début* in a barn, "unless I be by Sylvia in the day, there is no day for me to look upon."

"Will yer honour, then, look upon a poor fellow," said a voice close at my elbow, "and afford me the loan of the price of a pot of half-and-half."

Miss Villeroy uttered an exclamation of surprise at the suddenness of the interruption, whilst turning my head, I beheld an ill-looking fellow, dressed in the garb of a looker-out or keeper—a man who had formerly been in our employ, but long since dismissed as one of the most incorrigible poachers in the county. He had stepped from beside one of the trees as we passed, and followed us unheard upon the soft grass.

"What makes you here, sir?" said I, stopping and confronting him, both angry at his interruption and presence in the park at midday.

"Don't put yourself in a passion, Master Ratcliffe," returned the fellow, coolly. "'Tis yourself I'm in search of, more luck and grace to your honour. Times have been bad 'wid me, since your father turned me out of his service—bitter bad luck to him for doing so."

Miss Villeroy seemed alarmed at the ruffian's manner. She rode a few paces onwards. I felt half inclined to knock the scoundrel down; but, seeing that he was half drunk, I restrained my gathering ire.

"If you have business with me," said I (turning to leave him), "call at the Grange to-morrow. I am engaged at present, as you see."

"Faith, then, Master Blount," he said, "it's not myself that will spoil your sport; but I've been looking for ye for some time, and, to say truth, what you and I have to speak of had best be talked over in the open air."

The man's manner was singular. That secret fear which is ever attendant upon the guilty seemed to warn me that he had something of importance to communicate.

"What mean ye?" said I, growing curious, "and what can I have to talk of with a scoundrel like yourself?"

"Troth, then, it's a scounthrel like meself that will soon tell you that same. Does your honour's glory remember old Squire Villeroy, of the great house, yonder away there. By

dad, I thought I'd help your memory a trifle ; but mum's the word," he continued, seeing me start at his words, "I myself was lying concealed in the wood that same day when you overthrew the old boy. By the same token, I was at the inquest too, and saw that business, Master Ratcliffe ; your honour knows best why you told the story as you did. By the powers, it's no business of mine ; but I saw it as it happened, and a pretty piece of work you made of it, though you and I are the only wise ones in the matter."

This communication surprised and confounded me. I could not, indeed, at the moment, utter a sentence in answer. The fellow saw the impression his words had made. He was the picture of an unscrupulous and resolute Irish ruffian : his face was swollen from the effects of strong drink and little food.

"My business is short," he continued, glancing round, as if he feared interruption, "and I must speak it here. I'm starving—starving in the open world. If your secret is worth keeping from yonder lady, Master Ratcliffe, it's worth buying. Your keepers have been playing sharp upon me since that last business of yours, and the children cry for food. I must have money."

For a moment I looked at the man in doubt as to what I had better do in the matter. I felt astounded, and as if some demon had sprung up in my path to blast me ; and fearing Miss Villeroy might catch some unlucky word of the fellow's discourse, hastily took out a purse containing a few gold pieces and some silver, and threw it at his head.

"There's gold," said I, "let that purchase your present silence. Seek me at daybreak to-morrow here on this spot, and I will talk further with you ; meantime, vanish, in the name of heaven, and leave the park."

"More luck, and grace to ye," said the fellow, as he caught and pocketed the purse ; "I'll be here at sunrise, never fear."

The next moment he was lost in the deep shade of the trees, among which he darted.

I had no leisure for deliberation on this strange rencontre. Miss Villeroy, I observed, was waiting for me a short distance a-head, and hurrying after, I quickly overtook her.

"I was rather alarmed, Mr. Blount," said she, looking back, "at yonder savage-looking man. Since my father's cruel death, I have been easily frightened, and the sight of that man's evil-looking countenance has brought the dreadful event so forcibly to my mind, that I could have almost thought he was one of the murderers. He appeared to have some business with you. Do you know him ?"

"He was once employed as a keeper here," said I, "and wished to ask some favour."

"How familiarly he spoke," she returned ; "though I need

not marvel at that: the peasantry, hereabouts, are fast losing their respect for those in situations above them. Yonder man was a dreadful specimen; I almost feared he was about to attack and murder you in this lonely spot."

"I am grateful to Miss Villeroy for the interest she feels in my safety," I returned. "There was, however, not much to be alarmed at in the appearance of so emaciated a ruffian; but you say truly, the peasantry hereabouts, and I suppose it is the same all over England, are much altered in behaviour, even in my remembrance."

"In Ireland," said Miss Villeroy, "where my poor father had an estate in the county of ———, and where he made it a rule to spend at least three months of the year, the peasantry are greatly altered. Formerly, you never met a cottager, but if you glanced him afar off a look of recognition, he immediately returned it, and touched his hat, or had something civil to say in passing; now, however, it is a chance if you receive civility from your own tenants. I remember," continued Miss Villeroy, "we one day met a man, on whom my father had conferred many benefits. 'More power to you,' he said, as he stopped and accosted us, 'but you've been good to me and mine for many a long year, and it's myself that hopes you'll not take it amiss for the future, if I should fail in respecting you. Your honour's glory won't be annoyed, if I don't touch my hat in passing, for the time to come, will ye now?'"

"My father was a good deal amused, and begged he'd disrespect him exactly as he thought fit."

"Then that's exactly it," he said. "Your honour knows I'm a catholic; by the same token, myself amongst others have been forbidden to pay any respect to your family; and were I to persist in doing so, notwithstanding such order, I should perhaps be kilt before many weeks were over my head.' These brave and generous islanders, indeed, have most rapidly fallen off in their good feeling towards those of their beautiful country who are of ancient family, although, clever creatures as they are, none know so well how to banter the folly and pride of the rich trader, or upstart parvenu."

"They are aware, perhaps," said I, "of the assertion of their talented countrywoman, Miss Edgeworth, that it takes three generations to make a gentleman."

"Exactly so; and the aristocracy were respected accordingly. Now, however, they are taught to believe that extermination of the landed gentry is the only good, and that naught can go well with them till their employers are either knocked on the head, or made to wear leathern aprons. Such a doctrine, I have heard, is oftentimes preached to them in their chapels after mass. 'Tis a pity, too, for the sons of Erin are the creatures of impulse—brave, generous, and full of talent."

"You seem to be well acquainted," said I, "with Ireland, Miss Villeroy."

"Oh! I love the Irish," said she, "and delight in their country. Almost ever since I can remember, I have mixed much amongst them; my nurse was an Irishwoman, and she used to chaunt me the melancholy songs and ballads of the old time. My father, as I believe I told you, always spent three months of the year on his estate, in the county of Meath; and our place of residence was a long, low, irregular building. Old as your moated house here, it was situated in a part of the country, perhaps rather too wild-looking to be admired by most people, though I myself liked it the better for that. There was a feeling of unsafety, which made dwelling there very delightful; and our castle having been frequently attempted, we always lived with a certain degree of care and watchfulness when residing at it. Then as the house, during nearly all the time of our stay, was well filled with guests, you cannot think how merrily we used to spend our Christmas there. The huge fire-places blazed with turf and pine-logs, and the banquet and the ball followed fast each week while we remained.

"It was so amusing to see the discomfort of some of the English beaux, who did not quite relish being pelted by a concourse of savage-looking peasants when they went forth to hunt, or, as was not unfrequently the case, stopped and eased most quietly and unceremoniously of their Mantons, when they wandered into the mountains in search of grouse.

"There is generally a detachment of some regiment, either horse or foot, within a few miles of most towns in Ireland; and it is pleasant to be able to show the officers (thus isolated) some little attention. The last time we were there, I remember, there was a detachment of a Highland regiment, I forget now what was its number; but the two officers who were with it were two strange animals. One was a ferocious, gaunt-looking man, with a Jewish cast of countenance, and a wild and insane eye; and so tall and thin, that, like Justice Shallow, he looked the very genius of famine, and when fully equipped in his blue frock, which it was his pleasure to wear as long as a morning-gown, with the red sash tied round his hips, instead of his waist, you might have thought it was old Isaac of York put into regimentals. He was very mad in look, very taciturn in speech, and very ungainly in manner. The other, his lieutenant, was also a curiosity; and although the Jew was a strict disciplinarian, he was perhaps one of the worst officers in the service, and was completely managed and out-manœuvred by his subaltern, who by tact and management repaired the errors and faults of his commanding officer, and kept the detachment from a state of mutiny.

"The captain, who had evidently either never mixed in good society, or if he had, never had profited by it, was rude and overbearing in manner and pedantic in conversation; and as ready to maintain his presumption with the pistol-bullet as to offer the affront. The lieutenant, on the contrary, was a remarkably quiet youth, with a feeling of what was right, and a fear of being intrusive inherent in his nature, which caused him at first to be overlooked in company, till his worth and cleverness by some accident were made apparent.

"The captain came out immediately on the first introduction; he had something rude to say at once. The lieutenant was gentle and retiring on making a new acquaintance, until he met with some of the 'contumely, which patient merit of the unworthy takes,' and then his nature seemed changed, and he assumed a position which few could withstand.

"It was, indeed, amusing, whilst these specimens of soldiership were quartered in Castle Carron, to observe them. The captain, when crossed in opinion or thwarted, would become a furious madman, frequently getting into a dispute with some of our Irish gentry over their claret, which threatened hostile proceedings. On which occasion, a word or glance of the eye from his quiet subaltern, would reduce him to tranquillity and propriety in a moment; a single word coming between him and his wrath like a sunbeam on a sullen sea. Indeed, I had very many opportunities of observing the style in which that youth managed two very difficult matters, in a detachment so commanded; namely, his company of men, and their commanding officer.

"Poor fellow," said Miss Villeroy, with a sigh, "he was one of those persons never fortunate in life. His virtues stood him but as enemies; and with only his cloak and sword, and gentle blood to recommend him, his talents, which would have fitted him for the command of an army, were overlooked."

Whilst we thus conversed, the big round drops, which had for some little time pattered amongst the foliage, began to descend in a heavy shower, and the distant roar of heaven's artillery proclaimed the approach of a thunder-storm.

Near this part of the grounds there had formerly been, as was evident from the marks of its extensive foundation, in by-gone days, some building of considerable strength and importance. All that now remained of it was a deep well, of somewhat curious appearance, covered by a green mound. Tradition gave the structure a very ancient date, some folks affirming it to have been dug there for the use of and by the Roman legions.

Its situation in this lonely spot, amidst the surrounding massive foliage of the old wood, and only approachable through the thick underwood by a narrow sheep-track, was

singularly romantic. It was a favourite haunt of the peasantry of the village near; and, indeed, considered a sacred spot by the whole country round, from the circumstance of Mary Queen of Scots having once stopped in passing, as she was being conveyed a prisoner to Chatsworth, and descending to rest in the cool well-house, whilst the troopers, who formed her guard, drew up the bucket, that she might be refreshed by its icy waters.

There was also another source of interest to the common and popular herd, who generally delight in deeds of horror, a most diabolical murder having been perpetrated in its vicinity. A forester had been waylaid near the spot, by some deer-stealers with whom he had previously been at feud, and they having tied him neck and heels, threw him into the well. From that time, which was during the reign of George the First, it took the name of the old lady, in whose employ the forester had lived, and ever afterwards had gone by the name of Lady Dacre's well.

Having in our ramble reached the vicinity of this structure, I proposed (ere the bursting of the huge black clouds, which, as Trinculo says, could not chuse but fall by pailsful) to reach the shelter of Lady Dacre's well.

Accordingly, taking Miss Villeroy's pony by the bridle, whilst the brewing storm sang in the wind, I quickly led her through shrub and bush, towards its shelter, and tying the steeds to the branches of an aged tree which grew across the entrance, we stooped and entered.

Miss Villeroy was greatly pleased with the situation and appearance of this curious place; but it required much persuasion ere we could coax her maid into its shelter. She was pleased to display some of these little airs and graces before her over-indulgent young lady, which Mistress Honor is described by Fielding to have shown off, in contrast to the exquisite and beautiful Sophia Western. She declined taking shelter, she said, in so dismal-looking a pit. A heavy burst of thunder directly overhead proved, however, more persuasive than the dulcet tones of her mistress's voice, and she consented at length to descend a step or two into the interior; but the echo she there heard from the depths of the old well, as quickly scared her back again; we, therefore, had to explore the interior of the mound by ourselves. The light was partially afforded from a sort of arrow-slit in the roof on the opposite side, and only in a slight degree illuminated the cavern.

The well being handy for the residents of the adjoining hamlet, had always been kept in repair: but the labour of drawing up water in the ponderous iron bucket was so great, requiring two strong men in the effort, that it was very rarely used.

The massive iron chain, however, still remained attached to the windlass, and the bucket rested upon the iron grating which covered the opening, whilst two ponderous iron handles of the multiplying wheel, almost touched the walls on either side.

Miss Villeroy, after amusing herself by listening to the echoes sent forth from the depths below, stooped under the iron handles of the wheel, and made her way round to explore the other side of this singular-looking building.

The storm meanwhile had been visibly increasing, and at this moment became extremely violent, and the sky suddenly growing more overcast, the interior of the well now became dark as a wolf's mouth. Miss Villeroy was alarmed, and I luckily followed her, to lend my assistance, in retracing her steps to the entrance of the well-house.

At this moment a vivid flash of lightning shot through the aperture, lighting up the interior, as if it had suddenly burst into flame, and a clap of thunder immediately following, the mound was shaken to its foundation. A large portion of the brick-work of the roof immediately over the bucket instantly gave way, and fell upon the grating, carrying the whole mass down the well.

The fabric trembled, as if from the shock of an earthquake; and the brickwork upon which we stood seemed about to give way beneath our feet, whilst the most awful clatter sounded from the whirl of the machinery, the uncoiling of the chain, and the ringing sound of the descending bucket.

Miss Villeroy, shrieking with affright, would have been instantly killed in her attempt at gaining the flight of steps, but luckily I saw her intention, and seizing her in my arms detained her.

The situation we were in was certainly far from pleasant, though the danger was in reality not so great as it appeared. The moment the bucket reached the bottom we might escape, provided I could keep my affrighted companion quiet during its descent amidst such a din, where, indeed, one felt inclined, like "the king's son Ferdinand, with hair upstarting," to have cried, "Hell is empty, and all the devils are here." I, however, continued to hold Miss Villeroy firmly, and detained her, till the ponderous bucket reached the waters; and silence once more reigning within the building, we gained the flight of steps, and once more stood in safety beside the old mossed tree, which grew athwart the entrance. Here we found the attendant nymph nearly dead with terror and dismay.

Thus finished the adventure of Lady Dacre's well. I bore my companion up the dilapidated steps, so frightened and confounded with the suddenness and strange manner in which all had happened, that she appeared for the moment quite be-

wildered, and my attention and assistance was further requisite, in order to reassure and recover her sufficiently to proceed homewards.

CHAPTER VII.

" Comes in my father,
And like the tyrannous breathing of the north,
Shakes all our buds from blowing."

" A father cruel and a step-dame false."

SHAKSPEARE.

By the several chances I have related did I become the rescuer of the two young ladies, at different times, from situations of imminent peril. Certain it is, that I sought not such singular fortune; but, like Malvolio's anticipated greatness, it was thrust upon me by time and the hour. Nay, it has been urged against me by members of their family, that I played a villain's part in inveigling the affections of the two cousins at the same time:—so said the world also, and what the world is determined to assert, 'tis vain to combat.

O, miserable world, whose nature, I am persuaded, is base, and whose applause ought consequently to be valueless, what philosopher would care for thy frown or smile, when he considered thee for a moment, with thy hollow visage displayed!

When I look back upon the retirement in which I passed the earlier part of my existence, I am inclined to think the way of life my father wished me to follow was the most likely to conduce to happiness and content. Alas! as the handsome Spaniard sang to his guitar in the tower of Segovia, "a year of pleasure passes like a fleeting breeze," but a moment of misfortune seems an age of pain.

It was whilst Miss Villeroy and myself were in these somewhat peculiar circumstances, that we, perhaps rather prematurely, confessed our feelings towards each other. In fine, I loved, and was beloved again; and, like Mazeppa, "would have given the world to have but called her mine," "in the full view of earth and heaven."

But Miss Villeroy, with all her excellence and beauty, had one fault, and that fault "shook all our buds from blowing." Timid and fearful of the control of her somewhat imperious relatives, she had no will of her own, sacrificing all her best feelings to their overbearing and caprice. She was irresolute to a degree, and, beautiful as the gentle Desdemona (but unlike her in spirit), would have sacrificed herself to the sooty guardage of a hideous Moor (not from the incomprehensible feelings of her own

breast in his favour), but at the bidding of those whom she considered in authority over her.

It was therefore, when half supporting her, as I proceeded homewards by her side, and had poured forth all my passion, and received her confession in return, sealing my vows of everlasting love upon her lips, that she appeared suddenly to repent the confession I had wrung from her, and would almost have fled, as though she had been guilty of some fearful crime.

However, having once broken the ice, and found myself blessed with some return, I was not easily to be driven from my hopes. I had heard from those lips the sweet confession, and those eyes the break of day (lights which, indeed, might mislead the morn) had softly confirmed the tale, and almost in the same moment had I again heard the ill-omened words which syllabled her engagement to the hot-headed cousin she was bound to by her dead father's wish.

I forebore to press, therefore, at that time, for more than a transient smile in return for all my devotion; whilst to myself I swore to win her in spite of fate, though hell itself should gape to swallow her from my arms. Meanwhile the thunder-clouds had rolled onwards, and the sun shone out brightly as we wended our way back to the Grange, the heavy rain-drops glittering like diamonds amongst the massive foliage we were under.

At length we neared the frowning battlements of the old building, and, crossing the drawbridge, passed under the gatehouse, and entered the court-yard. Here a new and somewhat strange scene awaited us, in shape of the unwonted apparition of three travelling carriages, each drawn by four posterns, reeking with the recent speed at which they had journeyed. Servants were also busily engaged in unlading boxes and packages from within, and unstrapping imperials from without, these vehicles, whilst postillions, dismounted from their horses, stood splashed and bespattered from head to heel.

This was a sight I had never before beheld within "the roundure of our old-faced walls," and it not a little puzzled me to account for it. Who could thus be taking possession, I wondered, of our heretofore almost monastic and secluded dwelling. For the moment I almost forgot the fair companion who leant upon my arm. A sort of dread crept over me, a presentiment of evil to come, as I stopped to gaze upon this apparition.

Miss Villeroy, however, recalled her presence to my remembrance, and accounted for the unwonted sight of this party at the same moment.

"This must surely be your father," she said, "Mr. Blount, who has arrived unexpectedly from London."

"I cannot suppose it," said I, betraying the annoyance her

suggestion had caused, by my countenance and tone of voice,—“I cannot suppose it, since my father would scarcely travel with such a cavalcade as I see before me here.”

“There must surely be some mistake in the matter, then,” she returned. “Let us hasten on, and inquire the meaning of your dwelling being taken thus by storm.”

A servant, however, hastening to meet us, saved our labour.

“Your father has arrived, Mr. Ratcliffe,” said he, “accompanied by a party of strangers, and I have been directed to seek and bring you to him immediately. He awaits you in the library, sir.”

Ordering the attendance of the old housekeeper, in order to procure Miss Villeroy any change of apparel she might require after her excursion through the rain, I hastened into the withdrawing-room, where I had ascertained from the servants that Lady Constance and Mrs. Allworthy were awaiting our return.

I found them there accordingly, in company with the new arrivals, whom I had scarcely time to take a rapid glance of ere the servant again sought me in order to request my immediate attendance upon my impatient sire. Attempting, therefore, a hasty apology to Mrs. Allworthy for having so long been detained, I prepared to seek my honoured parent, promising to return to them in a few minutes.

“Heed us not,” said Lady de Clifford, “our carriage is ordered. Adieu! we shall be away before you return from your father, on whose privacy, I fear, we have unworthily intruded.”

There was a something of hauteur in Lady de Clifford’s manner as she said this, which was not natural to her; and I fancied she had perhaps either experienced some slight from the newcomers during my absence, or that perhaps their very companionship was disagreeable to her. However, I entreated of her to await my return, and, taking a hurried farewell, in case she should not do so, withdrew.

Entering the library, I found my father seated in an easy chair, which he seemed to occupy most uncomfortably and impatiently. The angry spot was upon his brow, too, and he looked pallid and unwell. There were also various alterations in his dress and countenance, which made his appearance strange to me. He had left his home in the costume of a country gentleman, somewhat of the old school. The cut of his coat, which used to be rather antique in style, and his hair, always neatly powdered, and combed backwards from the sides of his face and forehead, ending behind in a respectable pigtail, were both now altered in fashion. He wore a well-fitted and padded military frock-coat upon his body; and the powdered hair and neatly-tied pigtail had given place to a patent

spring wig, luxuriant in curl, and black as jet in colour; his whiskers, too, had been allowed to grow, and having been put through the discipline of some deep and searching die, had a burnt-up and somewhat fiery hue.

Altogether, he was so utterly changed in appearance, that had I not beheld him thus under his own roof, expecting so to find him, I should scarcely have recognised him for the same person. We were always an odd-mannered son and sire, as the world goes, for we had none of the usual style between us in our everyday intercourse. We generally met and parted without greeting; and when after an absence from home I returned, we invariably fell into our ordinary way of life, without comment upon each other's employments. My father always disliked having his health inquired about. Even if he had been seriously unwell, such a question would be sure to make him turn abruptly off, with a pshaw and a grunt; and he never by any chance asked such a question of another. His manners, somewhat stern at all times, had latterly grown more so. He appeared just now, indeed, in downright ill-humour with himself, and seemed inclined to quarrel with those about him.

"How is this, sir," he commenced, as soon as I entered; "I return to my home here, which I supposed would have remained, during my absence, secluded as before I left it, and I find its privacy invaded, and its apartments filled with strangers. Who and what are these visitors whom I encountered on my arrival?"

"They are the residents of Marston Hall, sir," I said; "Lady Constance de Clifford, and her relation, Mrs. Allworthy."

"And pray, sir," returned he, sharply, "to what circumstance am I indebted for the honour of a visit from Lady Constance de Clifford and Mistress Allworthy, her relation?—and why am I thus troubled with their company just at this particular time? Four days back," he continued, rising from his seat, and walking to the window, as if he wished to conceal the expression of his countenance from my steady gaze—"four days ago, I wrote you word that I should return this day, desiring to have apartments prepared for the visitors accompanying me, and mentioning in my letter, also, that I was extremely unwell. At all times, it is extremely unpleasant to me to be annoyed by strangers: at this time, it is both disagreeable and inconvenient to have an ill-timed visit palmed upon me. What explanation, sir," continued he, turning sharply round, "have you to offer for this strange conduct?"

"I have not received a letter from you, sir," I observed, "for at least a whole month. I knew nothing of your movements, and was quite unaware of your intended return, or should have been at home to receive you."

"Pshaw!" said my father, stepping from the window, glancing down upon the table, and taking up a heap of unopened letters and papers, which had, for the last few days, accumulated and been neglected.

"Here, indeed, is my letter," said he; "and unopened, as I live! This is something extraordinary, young man, to say the least of it. Scarcely have you attended to a single thing I required of you during my absence. Go, sir, dismiss these new friends of yours, and return hither when you have done so."

During this interview I had felt no slight anxiety to learn something about the strangers he had brought with him; but as he forbore speaking on the subject I felt diffident of making inquiry about them.

The explanation, however, came somewhat sooner than I thought for. Calling to me to return, just as I was about to leave the apartment, he pointed to the unopened letter before him. "Stay, sir," said he, "perhaps you had better take my letter with you, and peruse it before you return. It contains matters which I would rather not have to recur to. Amongst other things, and which the sooner you learn the better, since the lady is in this house, my letter would have informed you, had you taken the trouble of perusing it, that having thought proper to marry again, some part of my wife's family have accompanied her home."

He made this communication in a hesitating and awkward manner: something ashamed, he seemed, at having to utter what, perhaps, he could not reconcile as a very wise step he had taken in his old age. His eye fell, as I looked the surprise I felt. Ordinarily, he could look down a lion, which was proof to me that, in this instance, he was conscious he had not acted rightly. After a few moments' pause, which both felt rather awkwardly, I managed to utter some words of congratulation on so unlooked-for an event. Again he arose abruptly, and turning off, walked to the casement, and throwing it open, looked out upon the moat beneath.

As for myself, I quitted the presence as noiselessly as though I feared the blind mole could have heard my footfall, not a little astounded and bewildered with this new and unforeseen event. It was now a relief to me when I found my visitors had departed; and before I sought the acquaintance of my so recently and unexpectedly found relatives, I betook myself to my own apartment, in order to peruse the epistle which, in the excitement and delight of daily intercourse with the residents of the neighbouring Hall, I had so inopportunately neglected.

The letter contained much that was of consequence to me to know, but which at that time I cared little about; for when does a youth setting out in life think much of loss of fortune?

It explained, amongst other things, the intricacies and difficulties of a suit in chancery, and how it was likely to affect my fortunes in after-life. From it I also learned, that having put implicit faith in a scoundrel attorney, entrusting all his money matters to his guidance (instead of attending to matters of business himself), my father, notwithstanding the princely fortune he had hitherto enjoyed, was now in a most unpleasant situation.

All these things were fully dilated on, as also the circumstance of his having thought proper to marry the daughter of the new solicitor he had employed, who had, he said, in the most praiseworthy manner, given up his whole time and energies to his case. With regard to the money transactions, few men cared so little or knew so little of business of the kind as myself.

"The worst thou canst report is worldly loss," I said, as I folded up and pocketed the epistle; "and if, my dearest father, by this new connexion you have increased your stock of happiness, I shall not be made a jot the less content, come what will."

It struck me, indeed, from his appearance, although I had not ventured to make inquiry about his health, that he must have had a fit of some sort; though I rather hoped the change I observed was the consequence of his having adopted (perhaps at the wish of his bride) the modern and youthful style of dress, which in truth added at least ten years to his appearance.

I now sought my new relatives, who were partaking of a hastily furnished repast, in lieu of the dinner I had omitted to provide. The second view of the party by no means gave me a more favourable opinion of them than the first had done.

My new mother-in-law was a pretty-looking woman of about five and twenty years of age, exceedingly dark in complexion, with a dissatisfied expression, and a Jewish cast of countenance. In figure she was short, and rather *embonpoint*. She was accompanied by her father and mother, who had met the newly married pair at Buxton: with them, also, had come their son, and the remaining unmarried daughter.

There, indeed, needed but a glance at the whole party to show me that they were of Jewish extraction. The son, in particular, was a tall, dark-looking, awkward-figured, and swollen-featured youth: so truly Jewish in feature, mien, and accent, that you may observe his *fac-simile* vending the *raal* St. Michael's in any street of the metropolis, any day of the year in which oranges are in good repute.

He was gorgeously apparelled, and, like all Israelitish dandies, sported an elaborately-figured velvet waistcoat, and was half weighed down with the weight of metal of the ornamental chains around his neck.

In conversation he appeared determined upon striking an

impression, and out-Heroded Herod in the feats he had himself performed; his acquaintance, he would fain persuade his hearers, were the associates of royalty, and at the same time he was abashed evidently by the novelty of the capacious and venerable apartment in which he was now sitting, and the liveried attendance by whom his wants were ministered to.

The father was a sly-looking man, who veiled his evil disposition, and wreathed his countenance in smiles and affability; but if you watched him narrowly, you might see the scoundrel every now and then peeping out. He hated a Christian with a hate as deadly as old Shylock detested Antonio with; but he loved money more than he could hate anything.

Nathan Ben Levison was, indeed, a Jew who would "eat with you, drink with you, and pray with you, as well as buy with you, sell with you, and so following," where he could, by so doing, line his pockets with the gold of the hated Christian. In short, he was an unscrupulous Israelite: a grasping, designing, and crafty companion, whose disposition I thought I could discover before he had been resident a week beneath our roof.

Myself he looked upon on our first acquaintance as a good, easy youth, who, amusing himself in his poetical imaginations, was unfitted for the business of life.

His wife was not worthy of much observation, being but a common-place and vulgar specimen of her class; and, large as an elephant, had, to all appearance, been promoted from the kitchen to the head of the attorney's table.

The unmarried daughter was a pretty-looking Jessica of about seventeen years of age. Unlike her relatives, she seemed retiring in manners, and amiable in disposition. In another part of my history, I shall have to speak further of this young lady, as I became mixed up with her in a scene of fearful interest. At the present time, although she made several attempts to recommend herself to my notice, and become on terms of friendship with me, I repelled her courtesy with disdain, and treated her with the same hauteur that I displayed towards the other members of her family.

Such, then, were the strangers who had accompanied my father to the Grange, and were for the future to be its inmates. Yes, upon such an unpromising looking party did the bearded countenances of my ancestors look down from their frames, I may almost affirm, with a scowl of contempt, whilst at the same moment the evil eye of the rapacious Jew glanced upon their features, as he contemplated the period at which he should be enabled, by the web he was weaving around their living descendants, to have them disposed of by the hammer of the auctioneer, with as little remorse as Charles Surface displayed, in knocking down his sapient progenitors.

CHAPTER VIII.

"O, my sweet master——

Why, what make you here?

Why are you virtuous?

And wherefore are you gentle, strong, and valiant?

Know you not, master, to some kind of men

Their graces serve them but as enemies?

No more do yours. Your virtues, gentle master,

Are sanctified and holy traitors to you.

O, what a world is this, when what is comely

Envenoms him that bears it!"

SHAKSPEARE.

It will be unnecessary for me to dilate upon the trifles which began, and the consummate art used by these designing people in order to promote a serious quarrel between my father and myself, and the deadly and mortal hatred which consequently sprang up between us. We could hardly, indeed, under any circumstances, have been friends; even had we not interfered with each other's interest. They were as opposite to me as fire to water, and consequently, from the first moment of their arrival, I had endeavoured to avoid their society, by being as continually absent from my home as I thought I could venture upon, without giving offence to my father. He was now, indeed, continually closeted and employed arranging and settling matters with the old Jew attorney, in the hope of getting his involved affairs into a somewhat better train, so that he might not be obliged to part with the estate.

As far as I could understand, for I was not allowed to participate in their councils, it had been proposed by old Levison, that my father should visit the continent with his bride, till the Jew had in some measure arranged matters. But the old gentleman clung tenaciously to the halls of his ancestors, and the bare idea of leaving the estate was torture to him. He therefore was desirous of putting off that evil day as long as he possibly could. Meanwhile, the Jew attorney made frequent journeys to and from the Grange, in order to manage the matters of business connected with his office in town, leaving his wife and family still residents with us.

The young dandy, who had not been brought up to any profession, but who was doubtless meant to inherit the ill-gotten wealth which had been scraped together by the father, and was to be the founder of the future greatness of the family, now strutted about the Grange, and lorded it over the establishment as if he had been its whole and sole proprietor. He had the art to make himself exceedingly useful and necessary to my father, writing his letters, reading to him in his study, and,

indeed, performing all those little services which I myself was too proud, in his present mood, to offer him.

Wharncliffe Grange, meanwhile, had become a good deal changed in one short month after their arrival. My mother-in-law having dismissed a number of our old domestics, who had been taught to consider themselves as almost a part of the family, had substituted one or two of her own creatures in their stead—so that the establishment was now much curtailed, and a part of the house shut up. Even old Mrs. Sweetapple, the housekeeper, my father was so infatuated as to allow his shrewish wife to drive from a roof where she had so long and happily reigned paramount over the inferior domestics.

It is, indeed, impossible to describe the altered appearance of the Grange, both within and without its walls. It is true the altered circumstances of the owner admitted and required great retrenchment and change; but I could plainly see that these destructives were for levelling everything which (time honoured and noble) their dastard souls had no comprehension of.

Thus, then, the venerable and lordly avenue, which stretched far away into the more sylvan scenes of the park, was some time afterwards “dealt with, branch and bole,” “delted to the roots,” and cumbered the mossy carpet it for centuries had overshadowed. It may, doubtless, be asked, where was my father’s care, that so sacrilegious an act could be permitted under his very eye? Alas! there was as much change in him as in his possessions.

I had observed, at first, and a short time fully developed the truth of my suspicions, that he had the appearance of one who had suffered from a paralytic stroke. It was even so, and this fit having seized him whilst he was in the house of, and transacting business with, the old Jew attorney, he had overwhelmed him with attentions during his partial recovery, managed his matters of business, so as to give him little or no trouble during his illness, and taking most especial care not to allow me to be made acquainted with that or other circumstances appertaining, had inveigled him into a marriage with his daughter. It will, then, be easily conceived that the old gentleman, his mind warped, and his intellects at the period much impaired, wayward and tetchy, too, was easily worked upon and managed by these designing people.

Myself, indeed, they had now completely ousted from his good graces; the young cub in the cloth-of-gold waistcoat was all in all, and I but a powerless cipher.

On beholding, therefore, one evening, as I rode homeward, a party of labourers dealing their swashing blows in our avenue, and toppling over those “unwedgable and gnarled oaks,” which had stood the test of heaven’s artillery for centuries,

and still remained flinging their broad arms across the path beneath, so as almost to intercept the rays of the setting sun, I struck the spurs into my horse's sides, and, bidding the workmen desist from their employment, in a voice of thunder demanded by whose order they were committing such a barbarous act?

The cottagers of England, in these reformed and improving times, have almost forgotten their ancient feeling of love for the place of their nativity; they care little for the beautiful and the noble; neither have they now that love and attachment which some half a century back they bore towards the families on whose estates their sires before them had, perhaps for years, dwelt happily, and been protected and cared for. But hungry for knowledge, grovelling in dirt, they have sold their contentment for the mess of reform, and are, in most instances, to be classed among those base-born peasants who cry long life to the conqueror.

These fellows, then, who had been bred, born, and fostered on our estate, and whose relations had some of them accompanied and served in my father's troop when he first joined his regiment in America, leaning upon their weapons, and eyeing me askance, as that facetious delver who boasted of building stronger houses than the mason, the shipwright, and the carpenter's art could furnish, glanced a look upon me. They at first made no reply to my demand, and some two or three of them, after a sulky scowl, were so unmannerly as to spit upon their hard hands, and strike their hatchets deep into the nearest trunk they had been operating upon before I came up.

I shall, doubtless, be blamed, for in this, as well perhaps as in many other instances, allowing that violence of temper, which has been my bane here again, to get the mastery of me: I spurred my horse with such fury at these men, that I dispersed them, for the moment, like so much chaff before the tempest. Nay, I am sorry to say, that I completely overthrew one man with my horse's shoulder, and, trampling him under foot, lacerated his leg from knee to ancle. This was a fault, and which a moment's reflection would have shown me was both cruel and unjust. It was, however, perhaps as well for me that this ebullition of temper seized me where it did, as I firmly believe, had I ridden home, after having learned that this vile deed was being enacted, in consequence of an order from old Levison, the attorney-general of our domain, and supposing it had been given during my father's confinement to the house, and without his sanction, I should have caned him, without so much as informing him why or wherefore he was favoured by such application.

However, these bursts of passion generally have a reaction

and regret following them fast. Pitying, therefore, the prostrated labourer, who, after gathering himself up, and seating himself upon one of the fallen trunks at hand, continued to howl and hug his lacerated skin, whilst his comrades, gathering round me, began to handle their weapons, as though they meant to inflict upon me and my horse the return I in something merited at their hands, I became sobered, as it were, in an instant. Heeding not, however, their threatening looks and menaces, I waved my hand to command silence, and once more requested to be informed by whose directions they were making a clearance—top, lop, bark, and trunk—amongst the timber of our respected grove.

If I had wanted any additional proof that my popularity was on the wane amongst the people around our domain, I should have found it now. My new relatives professed the most radical principles; and old Levison and his son had been already making themselves popular amongst the cottagers on the estate, by preaching up the doctrine of a universal smash, a fair division of spoil, another golden age, and liberty and equality throughout the land—no church—no king—no laws—no army—no nothing. The Blounts, on the contrary, had always been most uncompromising and unflinching Tories; and, as the Whig party had just come into power, our principles alone began to render us unpopular.

Accordingly, the labourers having gathered round my steed, by their threatening looks appeared inclined to make me some return for the treatment I had favoured their comrade with.

"We have our orders," cried one of them, seizing upon my horse's rein, "from those whom we are justified in obeying, without asking your leave upon the matter."

"Ay," said another surly-looking ruffian, "we're employed now by him, who, if report speaks truth, is master of the place altogether—worse luck to you!"

"There, take yourself out of this, without bullying and interfering with us," said a third; "or, dang me, if I doant fetch thee out of thy saddle with a stroke of my hatchet. Who the devil are you, I'd like to know?"

"Stand back, Master Roughhead," said I, waxing once more wroth—"stand back, I say. Leave your hold upon my horse's rein, and lower that axe of yours, lest I bury the iron hammer of my hunting-whip in your brain. Answer me truly—for I am in no mood to be trifled with—by whose direction are you felling this avenue? Methinks I have some little right to ask the question."

"Ask it, then, somewhere else," said the first fellow, drawing back, and turning off; "we have our orders, I suppose, from those who have a right to give them."

"By what right, since you come to the rights of the matter,"

cried the man whose leg I had wounded, "do you come here galloping over our bodies. I wonder who is to maintain me for the next six months, whilst I am unable to work?—not you, I'll be sworn."

"Knock him off his rocking-horse," said another; "that'll teach him better manners for the future."

In short, growing more irate at the impertinence of these ruffians, we quickly came to blows, and a scene ensued which I willingly spare the description of. Being mounted, I had the advantage, and, pitching upon the most forward of the fellows, I gave him a severe lesson on the spot, and succeeded in driving his companions out of the avenue before me. When I returned to the spot where the wounded man still continued seated upon the trunk of one of the fallen oaks, I again demanded, after giving him five pounds to salve the hurt he had received, by whose sanction the devastation I beheld had been undertaken.

"Our orders were from Squire Levison," said the fellow, doggedly, "whohimself washere, and directing the work, not half an hour ago. See," he added, pointing his finger down the grove, "there's the young 'un standing there now. Best pitch into him, since you don't like what's done, instead of galloping about over our limbs."

I turned my head as the fellow pointed, and saw the young cub sneak hastily off, on seeing that he was discovered, from under the dark shadow of the tree whence he had witnessed the whole of this transaction.

"No!" said the labourer, rising painfully, and endeavouring to hobble after his comrades, "you don't choose to meddle there, I see. 'Cause he's a gentleman, I s'pose, he's not to be ridden over."

Muttering some further savage threat as he gathered up his tools, he limped away, turned off from the avenue, and vanished from a scene which, indeed, he added little to the beauty of by his presence, and soon afterwards made "desolation where he found such plenty."

Having thus fairly routed these worthy specimens, I rode slowly homewards, pondering deeply upon what had just transpired. Can it be possible, I thought, that amongst the various alterations and spoliations I had observed since these wretches had become his main advisers and managers, my father has consented to destroy the avenue in front of his dwelling, reckoned, as it is, one of the finest and oldest specimens in the county! If so, what desecration may we not expect here! If so, "then, farewell, thou loveliest spot of earth." "Farewell, Ionia," as the Assyrian says; "my own, my father's land, farewell; I'll owe thee nothing, not even a grave."

I could not, however, think such measures were by his sanction; but rather, that the attorney, having been desired, in one

of their conferences, to fell timber sufficient to raise immediate funds, in the malignity of his heart had taken the opportunity of making an attempt to destroy the avenue. Many of his operations had been marked by an equal want of sense, taste, and proper feeling, but which I had found it vain to combat and hinder.

The moat around the Grange, for instance, had, within the last few days, been converted into a dry ditch, the waters having been undammed, and suffered to empty themselves into some pieces of water situated amongst the meadows in rear of the building.

These sequestered pools were curious, and pleasant to look on, being clustered together, and dug with paths amongst them. Overgrown and half hidden, too, by the rushes and reeds which had been allowed for years to choke them up, they were well filled with carp and other still-water tenants, and, time out of mind, had been known by the name of the Abbot's Fish Ponds. Tradition, indeed, and the remains of the foundation of the old monastery upon which the Grange was built, made it more than probable that they had been dug there in olden times for the purpose of furnishing forth the boards of the successive abbots of the establishment, and their holy brotherhood.

Be that, however, as it may, the pike, and carp, and eels that sojourned pleasantly, and flapped and splashed in the waters of our moat, were now, as many as young Master Moses had not secured in a net (and for whose amusement I believe the alteration was chiefly got up), sent to pay a visit to their Catholic neighbours, and get sufficing absolution in the Abbot's Fish Ponds.

All this my sire was taught to believe had been done in very reverend care of his health, as the exhalations of the stagnant waters were pronounced extremely hurtful to his constitution.

Our old pleasure-grounds and gardens, too, once so unique in style, with their dark walks, leafy screens, terraces, and statues, were now being altered and modernized to meet the taste of their new mistress; and the prostrate figure of Diana lay beside the antlered Actæon and the fragments of his hounds; whilst many an attendant nymph, buxom and fresh-looking as an April morn, and with the proportions of a porter, fully accoutred, too, "with bended bow, and quiver full of arrows," were prostrated amidst the grubbed-up yews, by which they had before stood concealed and half hidden; river-gods, and satyrs, and fauns, too, were overthrown and borne away. Apollo no longer haunted his grot, and the cave where babbling Echo so lately lied, now untenanted and half demolished, was about to be converted into a citizenish-looking summer-house. The Muses' seat "was now their grave;" and in

the crystal waters surrounding the temple they had adorned, and where they were formerly reflected from, lay their veritable leaden forms.

Workmen were meanwhile employed in dislodging their pedestals, collecting and carrying off their various amputated limbs and bodies, and bearing them in vulgar wheelbarrows out of their sometime paradise: Altogether, these new-comers promised a total reformation and alteration in our dwelling and domain; and considering what they had in so short a time effected, I had every reason to believe that I should some day return home, and take it for the abode of another person.

Whilst deeply grieving over these alterations and improvements—for every one of their barbarities had already, as Sancho says, hit me in the teeth, and were, to a youth of my disposition, like so many sharp injuries inflicted upon my person—I rode into the stable-yard, were also a change awaited me; and the stalls so lately filled with our cavalry were now as empty and tenantless as Echo's cave.

CHAPTER IX.

"Now by my life, the day grows wondrous hot.
Some airy devil hovers in the sky,
And pours down mischief."

SHAKSPEARE.

My father and myself having been on the ill terms I have mentioned, we had not met for some time. I had, indeed, felt it awkward to intrude upon his privacy, as he now seldom left the apartments he had appropriated to himself, and consequently I saw but little of him except we chanced to meet by accident on the stairs, or in the passages of the house. Upon these occasions, in consequence of these cogging slaves having so puddled his clear spirit, and slandered me, he always passed frowning by without question or comment.

However, I was now resolved to meet him face to face, and hear from his own mouth whether he was really aware of the extent of the destruction going on, and, above all, if he had indeed given his sanction to the condemnation of the avenue.

To ask an interview, I considered would have only met with a refusal, remembering, as I did, that the last time I had sought and held conference with him upon the subject, our debate had been so violent, that I was told I should not again be allowed to enter his apartments. I therefore, somewhat unwisely perhaps, walked into the withdrawing-room, in which he was sitting, amongst his new connexions, without so much as asking permission.

The whole party were rather taken aback by my sudden appearance. The tea equipage was upon the table, and my mother-in-law presiding over it. My father, seated in his easy-chair meantime, was listening to the description of my sudden onslaught, and consequent dispersion of the workmen in the avenue, related with no slight exaggeration of circumstances by the youth in the gilded waistcoat, who I found had hurried home before me, with an account of this new outbreak.

There is generally an awkward lull in the previously noisy conversation, when the hero of the tale, suddenly and unwished for, joins the throng, and an attempt at turning it upon something so unjointed and out of season, that the visitor cannot easily mistake the fact, "that his lordship was the last man in their mouths." Thus it happened here.

At first, tale-bearer and commentators, stopping short, and looking confounded, suddenly broke out into various silly questions at each other; no one answering what the other had demanded. My father alone, silently and fiercely regarding me, rose from his seat, and stood full before the ample fireplace.

"I thought I told you, sir," said he, interrupting me as I was about to speak, "that after your improper behaviour when last in this room, I declined the favour of your again coming into my presence till you had offered proper apologies to my friends here and myself, for the language you then thought proper to indulge in."

"I am extremely sorry," I said, "for having on that occasion offended you."

"I perceive, sir," he continued, "that you are determined, in every way in your power, to annoy myself and family; and this very evening, I am told, you have countermanded my orders, assaulted and wounded my people, and used the grossest language towards myself."

"And your informant," I said, pointing to the youngster, who had placed himself beside him, "is the young gentleman on your right hand."

"You have not dared to seek me here," he returned, "ill as I now am, in order to repeat your former violence, and destroy the comfort of my apartment, have you?"

"I am merely here," I said, "to inform you of one circumstance, and inquire if such transaction has been commenced by your orders. When you have answered that question, I will instantly relieve you of my presence. Is it your intention, and have you really given orders to your people, to fell the avenue in front of your house?"

"When, sir," he replied, "I know of any right my own son has to question me, I shall then take into consideration the propriety of answering him."

"It is enough," I said; "the circumstance of your hearing my question without betraying the surprise I expected, is answer sufficient. I now leave you: but before I do so, I take this opportunity of saying, that your behaviour towards me latterly has been totally wanting in the kind feeling I have hitherto enjoyed, and which I do not so much take to heart, knowing it to proceed from the influence of the new friends who are around you. My home, therefore, is no longer pleasant to me, nor can I see its beauties thus destroyed piecemeal, without feeling so great a disgust that every alteration I have hitherto beheld has been like a dagger to my soul."

"It is well, sir," he returned, resuming his seat. "I trust you will soon have an opportunity of finding quarters more suitable to your tastes and feelings, where you will, perhaps, conduct yourself in a less insubordinate and lawless manner. I have written again to the Horse-guards about the commission promised you."

Out of temper, and discomfited at the severity of my parent, and the triumphant looks of the young gentleman, my rival in his favour, I could not quit the presence without a parting word or two, expressive of my disgust at the young Jew's proceedings. I spoke of him in no measured terms; and finished my discourse by bidding him beware how he continued his present system of falsehood and detraction.

"I swear by heaven," said I, "that any repetition of your conduct, in endeavouring to alienate the affection of my only parent from me, shall procure you chastisement, even though you took refuge on his very hearth!"

This outbreak produced a frightful accession of female clamour. The old attorney, too, who was too wary to take a decided part in the discussion whilst I was present, by his elevated eyebrows and shrugged-up shoulders, sufficiently testified his feelings. The young cub, however, emboldened by the shrill clamour of the females, stepped round to where I was standing, and, with fist clenched, defied me to strike him.

My father, who, enraged and excited beyond his strength, had sat down in his leathern chair, with a hoarse voice desired me instantly to leave the room. I looked at the young Jew with an eye that told him how much I should have liked to accommodate him, and was turning to retire, when he echoed and repeated my father's order to quit the apartment. The next moment he lay stretched upon the floor.

My father rose slowly from his seat, his finger pointed to the door, and his countenance resembling that of a corpse. He made but one step towards me, and fell senseless upon the hearth. This was, indeed, a dreadful finale to the dispute. All stood aghast for the moment.

I shall not attempt to describe my feelings at that moment

Gladly, indeed, would I have consented to the destruction of half the avenues and ancient buildings in Yorkshire, could I but have recalled the blow, which, falling upon the miserable fragment, had, it appeared, hit the life of my father. Whilst I bewailed my unhappy stars aloud, and tried to restore the old gentleman to life, the females of the company, instead of aiding my endeavours, were upbraiding me with the villany which had slain him. The old Jew attorney meanwhile quietly awaited the event. Whether my father recovered or not, it was the same to him. Equal to either fortune, he had so entangled his affairs, that he had, at all events, secured a suit which would serve his turn.

After awhile, to my great joy, my father opened his eyes, and I beheld signs of returning animation, and, assisted by the servants, I conveyed him to his room. The sight of his recovery restored also the care and tenderness of his wife; and the party once more resuming their kind attentions towards him, I left him to their care.

CHAPTER X.

"Still though the headlong cavalier,
O'er rough and smooth, in wild career,
Seemed racing with the wind;
His sad companion ghastly pale,
And darksome as a widow's veil,
Care kept his seat behind."

DRYDEN.

ALTHOUGH I had despatched a servant on horseback for the nearest medical aid, yet I determined to go in quest also of my friend, Dr. Probe, of whose skill and judgment I had reason to think highly. I therefore rode swiftly, as if a whole legion of fiends were at my back, till I reached the little village where he dwelt.

I was lucky enough to find him at his residence, although retired for the night, and explained to him the nature of the case, without dismounting from my horse. Receiving his promise to be at the Grange without delay, I returned towards my home as speedily as I had ridden from it.

At the commencement of the avenue which had unhappily caused this most unlucky dispute, I drew bridle, to proceed somewhat more deliberately, as well for the purpose of breathing my panting horse, as from the deep gloom of the place; for, owing to the great size and massive foliage of the trees, the avenue was so dark, that unless well acquainted with the locality, a horseman

might easily have been unseated by the overreaching boughs. As I therefore cautiously made my way, I was suddenly aware of a moderately-sized light, which, at first, only showing me in succession the trunks of the oaks in my progress, at the moment, I rather felt grateful towards. As I proceeded, however, the light growing rapidly larger, at length forced me to ride outside the avenue, and stop and gaze more curiously upon it. Whilst I did so, it rose into a broad sheet of flame.

Some buildings were evidently on fire, and burning away, in the direction of the Grange.

In a few minutes more, the avenue became illuminated from end to end, and the Grange, at its termination, displayed with its various casements, as though the sun itself was shining upon it at mid-day.

A bustling hubbub also was now heard, and that dire yell—

“As when by night and negligence, the fire
Is spied in populous cities.”

Figures, also, like the motes which “mine host” of the “Bonny Black Bear,” at Cumnor, saw dancing in his cup of canary, began to flit about before the flame. In fact, there needed little more to convince me that some of the outbuildings of the Grange had suddenly taken fire.

Clapping spurs to my horse, with the speed of thought, I rode onwards. Just when about to strike into a path which ran slanting across the avenue, and led from the farm-yard and its buildings, I saw a figure stealing towards me, but so intent in looking back upon the increasing conflagration, as not to have noticed my approach upon the soft grass. Suddenly, however, he heard the hoof-tread of my steed; and, stopping short, turned, and strove to avoid me. The movement was suspicious, and I resolved to arrest him; and, in a few plunges more, was nearly at his side. The cover was so near, that, had he not been lame, he might easily have reached it; but I threw myself from my horse, and seized him. The increasing conflagration showed me the features of Ephraim Roughhead, the man whose leg I had wounded on that same evening.

The fellow seemed so scared at the rencontre, that he was quite unable to answer the questions I put to him. I therefore, although suspecting something wrong from his strange manner, after recognizing, released him, and, putting spurs to my steed, galloped onwards.

The nature of the conflagration became more apparent every step I took. A whole rick-yard had taken fire, and was burning with such fury, that barns, cart-stabling, outbuildings, cottages, and nearly all the *et ceteras* of a well-appointed farm-yard, were becoming involved in the general ruin.

The confusion of such a scene needs hardly to be related. Men were to be seen hurrying hither and thither, impeding each other's efforts, marring each other's labour, and helping the flames by their unorganized and unauthorized attempts : others again were flying in every direction, except where they might have rendered service, no one attending to the suggestions of his fellow, but all directing, and none to obey. One cried out for water, another roared for buckets and ladders ; whilst women, clustered in a group, stood screaming as loudly as though they considered each particular howl was worth a parish engine in full play.

Water ! water ! was all the cry, and no man ran to fetch it. The quarter containing the cart-horses and cows had just become ignited, and there the scene was the most distressing ; for the cattle having been neglected by these wiseacres in their panic on first discovering the flames, the wretched animals resisted all attempts to bring them out ; but, kicking and plunging in their stalls, were there smothered and burnt.

A cry arose to get water from the moat ; but "young Master Launcelot" had made that easier to call for than to have. In the midst of this confusion, I made my appearance on the scene. Though somewhat of the latest, my presence restored something like confidence and order amongst the labourers and farm servants.

Managing to get together a couple of working parties, I established a chain from the horse-pond to that part of the out-buildings nearest to the Grange ; for the wind setting strongly in that direction, threatened danger to the building. Heading the other party myself, we scaled the walls, and, with axes, cut away and pulled down the outhouses, as long as the heat would allow us to work there. By this means we saved the Grange itself from destruction ; but, before morning dawned, most of the buildings of our farm, together with granaries filled with corn, and a large and valuable lot of hay and straw, twenty horses, and a decent accompaniment of cows and pigs, were entirely consumed.

The conduct of the young gentleman, my Jew relative, was as extraordinary as it was characteristic. Amidst all this confusion, having risen from his bed on the very first alarm, he had sallied out to observe the fire, and, turning up an old easy leathern chair, which had (amongst other articles of furniture) been hurled from the windows of the bailiff's cottage, he deliberately seated himself opposite the blaze, and, lighting his havannah, sat and smoked, and watched the progress of the conflagration, with apparently the utmost satisfaction, content, and curiosity.

The conduct of the other members of his family on that night was, I am afraid to say (although not quite so eccentric),

very much more wicked and unprincipled; for papers and deeds were from that time missing which were of the greatest consequence for me to have obtained possession of, after my father's demise; but which were never afterwards forthcoming.

That all these disastrous events had happened, and followed fast upon each other, by and through my unlucky influence, I had every reason to lament the truth of.

A small matter of what I had so little (patience), mixed up with half a scruple of forbearance, and these things had not, perhaps, taken place. The farm buildings had been fired by the man I had so unjustly injured; and it was by my evidence that the matter was subsequently brought home to him, and he was hanged—a circumstance that long weighed heavily upon my conscience.

The avenue, which, of course, I cared not again to advocate the cause of, is (for aught I know to the contrary) floating upon the broad waves of the Atlantic, in the form of "petty traffickers, or portly argosies." At all events, no vestige of it will be found at this time in front of the Grange.

The vile crew, too, who had insinuated themselves into the good graces of my father, and were stealthily plotting his ruin, had I but possessed tact and forbearance enough to have watched quietly, instead of waging open war with them, might have perhaps shown themselves to him in their true colours. But I served to keep them in check by my violence, thus making myself the most obnoxious person, apparently, of the party. My father, too, I had openly and seriously offended, and reduced to the verge of the grave, as I might, indeed, have expected would be likely to happen, from his present weak state and irascible disposition.

By care and medical skill, however, he was at length pronounced out of danger, and was advised, as soon as possible, to leave his home, and try the benefit of change of scene.

CHAPTER XI.

"I'd make me a willow cabin at your gate,
And call upon my soul within the house;
Write loyal cantons of contemned love,
And sing them loud, e'en in the dead of night."

SHAKSPEARE.

I HAVE not, for some time, mentioned my neighbours at the hall, but where, indeed, much of my time had been lately passed. Whilst these disagreeables were happening at my own

home, I shall not perhaps be blamed for availing myself of the intimacy I was upon there, to make it my occasional refuge.

Constance, who, during the time she remained in our neighbourhood, had grieved at the accounts I gave of the destruction going on, and the imbecility of my father, who allowed of it, was now in Scotland, having been summoned there by her mother, the duchess.

Miss Villeroy had also received a sort of invitation, which, indeed, might be called a command to accompany her: but, in this one instance, my influence overruled her grace's wish, and she remained at Marston Hall with old Mrs. Allworthy to keep her company in her retirement, and myself to sigh at her feet. The old Earl of Marston, too, occasionally came down for a few days, together with others of her family.

With this paradise, therefore, as a refuge, and where I was the welcomed and cherished guest of the radiant creature, its occupant and mistress, the sorrows and annoyances of my own home sat lighter upon me than they otherwise would have done. Still, however, I always experienced a sort of fear, whenever I approached the hall, of some untoward event, likely to interrupt the fair terms I was upon with its inmates. A presentiment of evil, which I could never effectually shake off, eternally pervaded me. I seemed born under an unlucky star, and the certainty of my destiny to be fixed on my mind.

For some time Miss Villeroy had not seen her betrothed, and as she now often confessed to me, she dreaded even to hear from him. I thought I saw that, each day we spent together, she was gathering courage to break off an engagement, which she now loathed to think upon. On my part, however, I never alluded to my rival or made mention of his name, being sufficiently satisfied to find myself gaining ground in her good graces; a vain hope, alas! but too soon dashed.

"Hard fate to have been once possessed
As victor of a heart,
Achieved with labour and unrest,
And then forced to depart!"

Such, however, was the constant presentiment of evil with which I was haunted. Completely banished from the good opinion and presence of my father, I seemed indeed not to belong to the family.

My step, nevertheless, was not a whit the less assured in the dwelling of my ancestors: whilst my enemies, on the contrary, sneaked about the premises, as if afraid to encounter my eye or provoke my reproof. They saw, doubtless, that I had something dangerous in me, which their wisdom and their villany taught them to fear. The young cub, especially, since the

lesson I had given him, had a wholesome and praiseworthy dislike even to pass me in the house; but his countenance showed the hatred of his heart, and I could see that he stored up the blow I had given him, to be paid for with compound interest at the proper opportunity.

Under these circumstances, as I said before, I saw my home as little as I could, and old Mistress Allworthy, whose goodness of disposition was not to be kept in check by the narrow ideas of the moreworldly-minded portion of society, but who always acted from the dictates of her own heart, was never so happy as when I was a visitor and inmate of the hall.

Thus, then, matters continued at a stand some little time. My father was now much recovered, and, I understood, meditated leaving his home for Italy, where he had been advised to go by his medical attendants, for change of scene.

One morning, I was beguiling the time, and amusing myself in those luxuriant meadows containing the pieces of water which were called the Abbot's fish-ponds, to which I have alluded, a lovely and sequestered spot, where the monks of old were wont to "daff the world aside, and bid it pass." Indeed, I have generally remarked, that in places where the mouldering remains of a monastic establishment are found, the surrounding scene seems greener and more luxuriant than any other spot in its neighbourhood—fat abbey lands, on which these drones loved to dream away their cloistered life, and pass the lazy-footed time by the help of the luxuries they had at command.

When I looked around, therefore, seated amidst the reedy swamp of these stock ponds, and ever and anon captured a goodly carp, the pleasure was two-fold, from following my sport in such a quiet vicinity as would have delighted old Izaak Walton.

Whilst thus amusing myself, a servant, approaching, informed me that my presence was required at home, my father being desirous of seeing me.

Somewhat surprised at this unusual summons, I immediately obeyed the order, and waited upon him in his room. Not having seen him since the affair in which I had made so unlucky a hit regarding the avenue, the opportunity of an interview was hailed by me with joy.

I loved my father, and, I think, he entertained all the affection of a parent towards myself: but we were both of a stern and unbending disposition; each kept the other at a most unaffectionate distance. There was too much of strict discipline in his mode of reclaiming me from the ungovernable state he supposed I had fallen into, owing to his own previous neglect of my youth: and he fully believed that I had become of so haughty, overbearing, and insolent a disposition, that it was absolutely dangerous to thwart or contradict me.

I, on the other hand, felt that he ought to have known me better, and not have thus suffered his judgment to be warped and his affections to be alienated from me by the artful set with whom he had connected himself. I would, therefore, willingly have "hinged my knee," and begged his forgiveness for having even unintentionally offended him; but that rash humour, which he himself had given me, held me stern and reserved. I could not bend, even to my own parent, where I felt I had done no wrong; and thus we once more met.

I found him wasted and pallid with the discipline he had undergone, consequent upon the violence of his illness, but still possessing all that dignity and presence for which he was always noted. He was alone, and, with a look of some severity, but with a countenance altogether "more in sorrow than in anger," he motioned me to take a seat. Most people who have suffered from paralysis have a distressed and sorrowful expression. So it was with my father; and his mouth being drawn down, gave his features a still more unhappy and changed appearance. I felt my eyes fill with tears as I looked on him, but I conquered my feelings so as to prevent their flowing. He also, I saw, brought his angry feelings to his aid.

"I have sent for you, sir," said he, "to inform you of my wishes regarding your future career. It is somewhat painful to me to have to enter upon matters of business in my present precarious state, as any exertion is likely to bring upon me a severe return of pain and illness. I will thank you, therefore, to hear what I have to say, and make no reply.

"You have, somewhat against my wishes, chosen to apply for a commission in the army. I have tried that life myself, and had reason to be disgusted with it as a profession. I objected to it at first in your case, from a desire that you should content yourself here on the estate of your forefathers, and lead the life of a respectable, and not altogether useless, member of society. The gentleman of landed property, who lives on his own estate, improving his poorer neighbours, and (within the sphere of his influence) scattering plenty and diffusing happiness, I consider a character fit for the notice of approving heaven. But the life of an officer in time of peace, on the contrary, I think a most unprofitable and miserable waste of existence. I have, however, seen enough of you lately to suspect that a quiet country life would never suit your disposition. I have also changed my views entirely regarding you; and as I before reluctantly gave my consent to your choice, I now desire that you follow the profession you have chosen. But I tell you beforehand, that you are about to enter a service in which, according to the vulgar adage, 'there are more kicks than half-pence;' and, to string another old saw to the end of

that, I can also assure you, there are but two happy days in the soldier's life,—‘the day he puts on, and the day he puts off, his red coat.’”

I knew this was not quite the real opinion my sire entertained of the profession of arms, as no man had been more devoted to the service than himself. But, although he affected to desire me to follow my choice, he had yet so much affection remaining, that he would have felt glad if I had renounced it.

According to his desire I made no reply, and he continued his discourse: “What I now therefore wish is, that you should either write to, or attend the levee of the commander-in-chief, refreshing his memory in regard to the promise given to your first application. State at the same time that you are ready to serve in any part of the globe; for I must inform you that the profession you have fixed on must be now your whole and sole trust. A soldier's life you have chosen, and a soldier you must now become. Matters are altered with me here, since you first applied for your commission; I granted your request then the more readily, as I thought a year or two spent in country quarters, together with an Irish detachment, would be quite sufficient to tire you of the foppery of your hussar jacket and steel scabbard. I therefore considered it as good a way of amusing your romance, and passing a few years of your youth, as any other. My circumstances, however, as I told you, are now much changed, and I no longer possess the means to allow of your making that figure amongst your brother officers which I intended. I shall, however, be able to give you a fair start in life, and have no doubt but that, with my interest at the Horse-guards, I shall be enabled to push you up the list as rapidly as you can desire.”

I thanked him and he continued his discourse.

“If you ask my advice, I should recommend your joining the infantry, as then you will learn the military art best. In that, however, I leave you to do as you please. Let not, however, any more time be lost; for the life you have lately led here is disreputable to yourself, and makes me miserable to hear of. In our last interview, when you intruded yourself into my presence, and assaulted the brother of my wife, you sufficiently showed me the error I had committed in not sending you to a public school, where your violence would have been properly watched and corrected.

“I will hear no reply, sir,” said he, rising to put an end to my visit, “either write or attend the levee of the commander-in-chief; meanwhile, consider well what I have said, and I wish you all success in the profession you have chosen; but I tell you fairly, before you enter upon it, that it leads to nothing. I am now too ill to speak further on the subject; but will

in a few days see you again, and hear the event of your second application."

Thus finished my interview with my father. Being forbidden to reply, I was precluded from any attempt at reconciliation: for, although he accused me of so much violence of temper, I well knew that had I attempted to disobey him, he would have perhaps been reduced to the same situation I had brought him into at our last conference.

I was not, however, sorry that he had directed me to write to the Horse-guards; as, although I feared to leave the neighbourhood of the hall, yet I felt that had he (in addition to his other somewhat tyrannical treatment) put a veto upon my now accepting the commission promised, I should have been altogether in a most hopeful situation. I, therefore, indited a letter to the commander-in-chief without delay, and, calling for my horse, resolved to put it into the post at the little village at Woodville, which was about a mile from Marston. Indeed, it was vain for me attempt to ride in any other direction, for if I did turn the head of the beautiful barb Lady Constance had given me, the beast so well his knew old home and comfortable stall there, that at the first opportunity he would bend his steps in the direction he was sure to be allowed eventually to traverse.

So it was with the rider: no spot seemed so green, no road so pleasant, as the short cut through the plantations, and across the common, till I came in sight of the venerable-looking hall, and was brought to a stand by the deer-palings of the surrounding park. The very trees which grew there, and overshadowed them, appeared to my eyes more noble and stately than any other in the county.

Strange passion, which thus in the heyday of our youth seizes upon us like some violent distemper, and drives away all interest and enjoyment unless pertaining to the being who alone fills all our thoughts, and distracts us with alternate doubt, fear, and delight!

Here, then, oft-times when I did not think proper to introduce myself into the presence of the ladies, it was my wont to pause and catch a glimpse of the neighbourhood which they sanctified by dwelling in; and, like the knight of the mirrors, throwing myself on the ground, whilst I allowed my horse to feed upon the pasture with which the place abounded, I indulged in the silence and solitude necessary to my amorous thoughts. On these occasions the Muses were not so opposite but they deigned to visit me sometimes; and I composed a whole litany of songs, sonnets, and poems to the fair empress of my soul.

At the present time, whilst lying thus along, "like a dropt acorn," I composed a rhapsody, which I thought so excellent that I determined to serenade my mistress with it that very

night. Accordingly I arose, and, proceeding to the village at hand, stabled my steed, and resolved to dine at the little inn there, and then, accompanied by solitude and the dews of night, spend my time till morning in wandering about in the vicinity of the hall.

I had despatched my letter and reasoned with myself, that now every moment I passed away from this spot was time lost, "like offered mercy," never to be regained.

Mine hostess of the little inn where I baited, having promised a rasher and eggs for my supper, it was accordingly served up by her daughter, a buxom lass with corkscrew ringlets, and cheeks as red as her top-knot. During the intervals of her attendance upon me, she amused herself by thrumming upon a broken-winded instrument, which she denominated a guitar; and which I borrowed of the fair songstress to aid me in my serenade.

The moon shone out brightly as I crossed the park, and, leaping the garden-wall like the love-sick Montague, found myself under the window of her I adored. The clock tolled eleven as I stood with my back against a mulberry-tree, and nearly hidden by the shade it afforded.

Presently I was rewarded by the appearance of a light at Miss Villeroy's window, which flitted backwards and forwards in the apartment, and then became stationary. "The flame o' the taper (methought) bows towards her." I was about to strike upon my instrument, but at that moment she appeared, and, throwing open the window, looked out upon the moonlit garden beneath. What a picture was there for a Juliet! Her dark ringlets almost concealed her cheek of cream as she leant from the casement. She looked long and fixedly in the direction of the Grange. I was about to discover myself, when, some one within the room speaking to her, she withdrew and shut the casement.

Presently the light was removed, and all remained quiet. Then, when I thought the inhabitants of the hall had retired for the night, I touched the strings of my guitar, and commenced my serenade.

THE SERENADE.

"You sleep—and o'er your slumbers light
May happy visions play,
And people thy soft dreams at night
With all the joys of day.

"You sleep—your long hair twined around
A neck like mountain snow;
Your sweet lips hushed in slumber sound,
No more with music flow.

- "You sleep—your dark eye shines not now
Nor beams like love's own star :
The smoothness of your soft white brow
May sorrow never mar !
- "You sleep—your small hands gently lie
Like snowdrops of the spring ;
The fringe that guards thy close shut eye,
Is like the black cock's wing.
- "You sleep—and on your lip a smile,
Nursed by young Cupid, lies ;
Its silent eloquence would wile
A spirit from the skies.
- "You sleep—in beauty more supreme
Than Persia's daughters proud,
More lovely than the early beam
That gilds the morning cloud.
- "You sleep—like moonbeams on a flower
In purity sublime,
As rests in light a joyous hour
Upon the breast of Time.
- "You sleep—like some rich lily fair,
That rests in shady dell.
In thy dear heart is any care
For him who loves thee well?"
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CHAPTER XII.

"Thou fearful man,
Affliction is enamoured of thy parts,
And thou art wedded to calamity."

SHAKSPEARE.

"Strike on the tinder, ho !
Give me a taper ;—call up all my people ;
This accident is not unlike my dream ;
Belief of it oppresses me already ;
Light, I say ! light !"

SHAKSPEARE.

I HAD proceeded thus far with my song, and might have perhaps continued it, till I favoured the night owls with as many more stanzas, when suddenly I became aware that I was not alone in the gardens. Indeed, I had been half conscious, during the two last stanzas, that a sort of quavering chorus was kept up near me ; but I took it for the echo, or reverberation of my own voice sent back from the stone walls of the building. However, the last words were repeated in a sort of

half maudlin, *sotto voce*, by a figure which, leaning upon his gun, looked, in the shadow of the trees, like one of the huntsmen in *Der Freischutz*. At first, supposing it one of the keepers who had been attracted by the melody of my guitar, I was about to bid him good night, and shift my quarters; but the fellow anticipated me by coming forward.

"Good night to you, Master Blount;" said he, "a pretty caterwauling this, you're making here."

He was evidently half drunk, and as he spoke, the moon, shining full upon his hang-dog visage, I recollected the truculent ruffian whom I have before mentioned as having witnessed my unlucky adventure with Miss Villeroy's father. Indeed, I have omitted to record in the "twisted and ravelled skein of this history," that after my first encounter with this man, I had succeeded in purchasing his silence regarding the baronet's death.

At the present moment I felt annoyed and vexed at his presence, and would fain have left the garden, but his dogged insolence permitted not my doing so. His success on a former occasion rendered him again desirous of making an attack upon my purse. Had I acceded to his demand for money, all perhaps had been well; but my choler arose, and seizing him by the throat, I threatened, unless he quitted the spot, to drag him from the gardens.

He was, however, a resolute fellow, as ready to strike as to speak.

"Stand back," cried he, suddenly shaking himself clear of my grasp, "unless you want a charge of shot through your lungs."

He clapped the muzzle of his piece to my breast as he said this. The next instant I had struck it aside, and closed with him. He pulled the trigger as I did so, and the smash of half-a-dozen panes of glass, accompanied by a female shriek, told that, although he had missed my unfortunate carcase, he had brought down some person within the house.

It was even so. I had never considered whilst I sung, that my serenade was likely to delight the ears of any one besides Miss Villeroy, who, in fact, had not heard a single stanza: whilst poor old Mistress Allworthy, who reposed upon the ground-floor, having been effectually prevented from sleeping by my ditty, arose from her bed to observe who thus thrumbed before her lattice, and received the contents of the poacher's fowling-piece full in her unfortunate face.

At first I thought the unlucky villain had shot Miss Villeroy; but a single glance showed me such was not the case; the casement on the ground-floor being the one shattered.

Meantime, I held the fellow so tightly, that he found it impossible to get free. Indeed, I felt almost inclined to strangle

him, so great was my anger at the miserable termination he had caused to my serenade; but I thank Heaven the words of my father on that very morning, came to my remembrance, and I contented myself with keeping him secure.

Finding himself unable to get free, he made a desperate thrust at my breast, with a knife he managed to get out of his pocket. I was, however, aware of his purpose, and prevented the thrust taking effect. And now commenced a deadly struggle for the mastery, in the midst of which we went down together, and lay rolling and fighting under the tree where I had begun my unlucky serenade. It was fortunate, indeed, that we fell at that moment, as I heard, whilst we grappled together, a casement swung cautiously open, and the servants in full consultation.

"There a be Thummus," said the head-coachman; "I saw'd un go under the mulberry-tree this moment. Give un Brown Bess like a good un."

The sweeping discharge of a well-filled blunderbuss immediately rung out, and half-a-score of slugs rattled amongst the foliage above our heads.

My foe now redoubled his efforts to escape. I however held him secure, and dragged him into the open space.

The moment I did so, a gun was again discharged from the open window, and the shots (luckily too far off to do us any harm) penetrated our clothes, and stung our bodies like a swarm of hornets. The poacher shook his ears as the shower flew about him, and half-a-dozen pellets entered his black-looking visage: a small retribution for what he had just inflicted upon Mistress Allworthy's respected countenance. I called out to these heroes to cease firing, as I had captured the offender, or rather that the culprits had captured each other. Such, however, was their alarm, that (having reloaded the blunderbuss) they gave us the benefit of another discharge ere they did so; and shot and slugs flew about our bodies, whistling in the night air, and cutting the shrubs of the garden all round the spot where we continued so affectionately locked in each other's embrace. Indeed, I should have been obliged to give up my capture, and remove from the vicinity and range of the besieged, had it not been for the interference of the butler of the Hall, who, recognising my voice, effected a cessation of hostilities.

On the sally of the garrison, therefore (which immediately took place, on finding an ally under the walls, and the enemy taken prisoner), I delivered him up to their custody. As for me, as I entered the house, I felt afraid to learn the extent of the mischief I had caused,

I found the female servants clinging for protection around the portly form of Thummas Brasington the coachman, who (although during the heat of the engagement he had winked at

the flash of his own weapon) was now manfully chiding the fears of the females. From this party I learned that it was Mrs. Allworthy who was the sufferer; and had I believed the direful story they related, I should have credited an account dreadful as the exaggerated report of Sir Peter Teazle's duel, in which the pistol ball of his opponent, after doing incredible mischief, knocked over the general postman with a double-letter from Northamptonshire.

Leaving them, therefore, I sought Mrs. Allworthy's apartment, knocked at the door, and begged to know the extent of the mischief. It was answered by Miss Villeroy herself, who, on the alarm, had hastily thrown on her clothes, and descended to Mrs. Allworthy's room. From her I learned that the old lady's respected countenance had been grievously wounded by small shot: and although she was much pained by the infliction, she treated the accident lightly; and having witnessed the passage of arms before her window, was more anxious about my safety than her own misfortune.

As Miss Villeroy herself was, however, in much alarm about her friend, having learned the extent of the mischief, I returned to the village, in order to despatch a medical man to her assistance.

As I hastened onwards, I held council with myself about the unlucky chances that had of late befallen me. My acquaintance amongst the faculty was becoming extensive.

"This is the third errand, Master Ratcliffe Blount," said I to myself, "that you have undertaken of the same sort, and all to repair the mishaps and misfortunes you yourself have caused." The reflection was not a pleasant one. I hated unpleasant reflections. "What signifies looking back," said I, "when the journey lies forward? But then, that unlucky scoundrel of a poacher. My intemperate zeal, in capturing that rascal, was the most unlucky scrape of all. *N'importe*, 'twas too late to think about it now; the deed was done, and I had reached the village."

Knocking up mine hostess of the little inn at Woodville where I had dined, she directed me to the house of the most eminent practitioner of the place.

"If you can get him up," said the landlady, "you'll be cleverer than most people, for he's a queer chap yon, and not fond of attending upon folks, either by night or day."

I however effectually aroused, waited for, and returned with the doctor to Marston Hall.

Mistress Allworthy had now left her apartment, and was lying on a sofa in the drawing room. She was pallid and faint from loss of blood, but lively as ever.

"Come, Sir," said she, "produce the man of art, for, believe me, I am very ill; though, indeed, after all, I believe a bottle

of Ruspini's Styptic, and a half-pennyworth of lint, (if I had them here), would be worth all the surgeons in the kingdom.

Dr. Misaubin, the professional I thus captured and brought with me, was an elderly man, of eccentric manners and extraordinary appearance. His conversation was curious, as his manners were odd, being interlarded with a continual series of scraps from old plays, and extracts from his various reading, and he introduced himself accordingly.

Stopping short, as soon as he entered the apartment, he quietly took out and adjusted his spectacles, and with his gold-headed cane to his nose, he bent a long and searching look upon every part of the room, and each individual in it. He finished his survey as soon as his eye alighted upon the invalid, and he immediately stepped up, and examined her wounded face.

"Upon my word, madam," said he, taking from his pocket a flask, and pouring out about a glassful of its contents; "upon my word, madam, you seem to have been made the mark of smoky-muskets; permit me to prescribe a restorative in the first instance."

After examining the wounds of his patient, the doctor desired her to be removed back to her own apartments, in order that he might extract some of the shot which disfigured her countenance. Miss Villeroy accompanied her, and I remained to learn the result.

The night was far spent before Miss Villeroy returned. She informed me that the patient was much exhausted from loss of blood; but that the doctor had succeeded in rendering her a trifle less like a tattooed red Indian. I was obliged to explain the part I had in the transaction, for which I ventured the more readily to hope for forgiveness, as the accident had happened from my devotion and serenade.

I threw myself upon my knees, as I pleaded my suit. Miss Villeroy seemed annoyed and vexed. She was seated beside the table, her cheek leant upon her hand, and as I seized upon its fellow,

"My lips, two blushing pilgrims ready stood,
To smooth that rough touch with a gentle kiss."

At that moment the door opened, and Dr. Misaubin re-entered.

The doctor was a great observer. He stopped short when he saw he had interrupted a love-scene, bowed to the lady as she left the room, and then approaching, as I arose accosted me with a quotation from his favourite *Hudibras* :—

"Forgive me fair, and only blame
The extravagancy of my flame;
Since 'tis too much at once too shew
Excess of love and temper too."

"How do you once more, sir?" he continued. "Really, you rode before me, at so fearful a pace just now, that until this moment I have not had opportunity of exchanging a word with you. You reminded me, sir, of that humorous fellow, Andrew Fairservice, who galloped over moss and moor on the night he acted as guide to Francis Osbaldiston across the border. I really was obliged to track you by the sparks from your horse's shoes, upon the beaten flint. May I beg the favour of your name?"

"Blount, sir," I said, "at your service."

"What, of the Grange here, hard by?"

"The same," I answered.

"Truly, I am glad to have the opportunity of making your acquaintance, Mr. Blount," returned the doctor. "And now, inform me if that young lady who left the apartment is Miss Villeroy. I thought as much," said he, "from her extraordinary beauty. You admire Miss Villeroy, Mr. Blount; I see you do."

'If lusty love should go in quest of beauty,
Where should he find it fairer than in Blanche?'

"Don't be angry, Mr. Blount," he continued, offering me his snuff-box; "take a pinch of this rappee. Rather a curious sort of an accident this old gentlewoman, my patient, has met with."

"I was about to ask you, sir," said I, interrupting his loquacious mood, "what is your opinion of her case? I trust that a few days' inconvenience to her will be the extent of the mischief."

"A few days' what?" almost shrieked the doctor; "why, what in the fiend's name do you—do you pretend to know about gun-shot wounds, my dear sir; that old lady will perhaps have erysipelas in a few days, and die in the torments of St. Anthony's fire. Inconvenience! quotha, as who should say, a female aged, without mark of mouth or even tooth in her head, could receive a matter of a couple of score of leaden pellets in her cheeks, lips, and chin, with half as many perforating her neck and breast, and only suffer a few days' inconvenience! Sir, I tell you, upon the faith of a practitioner of five-and-thirty years, *that* old lady, if she does not expire of erysipelalous inflammation, will be likely to be seized with tetanus, in the vulgar tongue, lock-jaw, but

'Why so pale and wan, fond lover,
Prithee why so pale?'

Come, I am not quite serious, and hope and trust that, as you say, a few days of my attendance will set all to rights. Do me

the favour to lay hands upon that bell. I am told there is another patient here in the person of the prisoner ta'en. The captive of thy spear and thy bow."

I accordingly accompanied the lively doctor into a room, in the lower part of the house, where my evil genius was kept in durance, guarded by that redoubtable hero of the blunderbuss, Thummas Brassington, who, weapon in hand, was in waiting as gaoler and sentinel without the door.

"Come, Buckingham," said the doctor, "some of your function; turn the key, and let us see this formidable hero."

The poacher was sitting in a chair, close against the wall, with his feet thrust out before him, and apparently half asleep. The doctor took the candle and approached him:

"Why, you cateran, you born devil! as Nichol Jarvie has it, what a visage thou hast gotten: what with thy accustomed hideousness, and the blood and dirt thou art begrimed in, you look like the genius of rapine and murder."

"I never murdered any one yet," said the fellow, "whatever I *may* do; and that's more than some of the present company can say. I don't allude to you, doctor, though I dare say you've not gotten a cleaner breast than others of the physicing trade; but we shall see, since young master there has brought me to this, whether I cannot make a nice story of his doings."

"What the devil does the injurious thief mean?" said the doctor. "Hold your tongue, thou canker of a calm world, or tell us where you have been hurt, and what we can do for you. Are you struck anywhere, besides in your Caliban visage?"

"There's not much the matter, doctor," said the poacher: "I've had small shot in my hide before to-day. So unless you mean to release me, I shan't trouble you to bother yourself about my wounds."

"I let thee out of durance!" said the physician. "I unmanacle thy caitiff limbs! Marry, I'll see thee hanged (which I think in truth I am like enough to do) ere I give thee opportunity 'to rob a foot further.'"

"Then," returned the ruffian, "go, and take your gibberish elsewhere."

"I think, Mr. Blount," said the doctor, "our consultation has lasted a sufficient time. With regard to this gentleman, I know of nothing so likely to suit his malady as a ligature applied over the muscles of his throat, and an uncertain foundation beneath his feet. He is troubled with a redundancy of rascality; this fellow, I know him better than he knows himself. Thomas Brassington," continued he, taking the coachman's gun from him, "traverse me your caliver thus; and attend upon this *civil* gentleman *within* the apartment—mind, *within* the apartment; or whilst you are looking fierce and playing soldiers there outside the door, this 'minion of the

moon' will be shaking the dust from his feet, and making himself beautiful upon the hills withoutside the mansion. Why, this fellow, Mr. Blount, has broken half the jails in the country. Now, sir, I am ready to attend you."

And the doctor, leaving the apartment, ascended to the hall.

"Your guitar, Sir," said the footman, who had waited on us: "we found it lying under the mulberry-tree, and the man's gun also, sir, we have got here."

"Keep the gun till called for," I said.

"And light the kitchen fire with that crotchet box," added the doctor; "for I never yet knew or heard of any good that came of serenading old dowagers by moonlight. And now, Sir John Blount, of the Dale, or Grange, or whatever else you love to be styled by, what are you about to do with yourself after this last action? Do you mean to 'incontinently drown yourself?' Or are you going to your own home to bed? Or, as the lovely Aurora is just about to disclose herself from the balconies of the east, suppose you ride home with me. We will have a strong cup of coffee, my custom always in the morning, when I have been molested and called up in the night; after that I will show you over my farm; after which, you shall breakfast with me. When that is over, we will have a dish of chat, and by that time it will be requisite for me to revisit my patient here."

I accepted the doctor's offer, and the village being only two miles from the Hall, he mounted his horse, and I accompanied him home.

The old gentleman's house was just at the end of the long street (of which the village was, indeed, composed), and he let himself in without disturbing the servants, after having stabled his steed, and taken off the bridle and saddle himself. There was fire in his parlour, coffee-pot on the hob, and cups and saucers on the table. The doctor boiled his coffee, blew up his fire, uttered at least a couple of dozen quotations from his favourite Shakspeare as he did so, lighted a cigar, and motioning me to seat myself in one of the easy chairs by the fire, took the other himself, and then pouring out his favourite beverage, leaned back in his seat, and scarcely uttered even a line from his beloved author, until he had puffed away his cigar to the very nose.

"My havannah has evaporated," he then said, "and now I am ready to give audience to any tongue, speak it of what it may. Mr. Blount, you must know I have rather taken a fancy to you. You seem to me a proper and extremely modest youth. Come, another cup of coffee; I always think that the cursed misery of being dragged from one's bed, and out of a fresh sleep in the middle of the night, is nearly atoned for by the delight of a cup of well-made coffee and mine havannah

on returning home; and now, if you feel inclined to wander with me over my farm, have with you."

The doctor's farm was about three quarters of a mile from his house, and was his hobby. Being independent of his profession, which yet he professed to practise, he spent most of his time at his farm; indeed, when once he got safe there, it was a hard job to draw him from his earth. He had only been a year in the village of Woodville, having for some few years before resided in the town of Sheffield; but his reputation as a clever although extremely odd man, was great. In early life, he had been surgeon to a regiment of the line, and seen much service. Indeed, so great a favourite was he in the corps to which he belonged, that his retirement was regarded as a calamity by the whole corps. In the regiment he went by the name of Will Shakspeare; not from any likeness he bore to the bust or picture of Nature's 'private secretary,' but because he had him, amongst others, eternally at his tongue's end, and consequently, whenever he spoke, quotations from various authors seemed to quarrel for utterance. With the doctor, then, I walked forth, accompanied by half-a-dozen bandy-legged terriers of all sorts and sizes; so that, being an odd-looking little man, with an exceeding red face, and not particularly smart in his appearance, wearing an antique and half military cut coat, and horseman's boots pulled up nearly to his knees, at the first glance he was rather a puzzling figure to understand.

He showed me his farm, and the improvements he had made; and might, perhaps, have omitted to go home to breakfast altogether, had he not recollected having invited me to partake of that meal with him. Accordingly, we returned to enjoy some of the luxuries his hobby afforded, and found a table covered with a meal which would have served for a highland breakfast.

"How now, dame Partlet, the hen," he commenced to an old woman, his only attendant, one of those clever useful old bodies, who make a house more comfortable, and get through more work than half-a-score of your London bred servants: "Bring us another 'chalice for the nonce,' and make the tea instanter. Now that old creature, Mr. Blount," said he to me, understands everything I say to her from the motion of my lips; for she has been deaf as a post the two-and-forty years, 'Heaven reward her for it!' As for me, I have exhausted mine art and my lungs in trying to make her hear. What the devil are you at?" he roared to the old dame, who, heeding him no more than if he had been a post, indeed, blew up the fire. "What the devil are ye at? 'All the plagues of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you.' What's all this trouble to make 'fire burn and kettle bubble?' Come, Mr. Blount, here's eggs, ham, tongues and fowls; tea, coffee, chocolate, and half-a-dozen things

beside. So to breakfast with what appetite you may : 'Avaunt and quit the presence, Sycorax,' 'plod away on the hoof,' 'seek shelter, pack.' Kick all these freckled whelps out before ye, and give 'em some breakfast, too."

The dogs, who seemed to understand their master as well as the old dame, trotted out with her, and we were left to the pleasure of our meal.

"It is not often," said the doctor, "that I am honoured with the company of a guest, either at breakfast, dinner, or supper, Mr. Blount; but as I told you just now, I have taken rather a liking to you; I know not wherefore, except that you do not look happy or prosperous in this 'wide and universal theatre.' You are the only exact personification of the Master of Ravenswood, I ever saw in life. Take some more cream to your coffee: and had you but a coal-heaver's hat on your head, and a bottle-green tunic on your body, as you sit there opposite me, I should fancy myself that old hen-pecked sneak-cap, the lord-keeper, taking my breakfast in the tower of Wolf's Craig. Come, you must eat that chicken, and those eggs, and that bacon. Hand me your cup, and leave the 'berry-bitch' for the tea-pot. No, it's not often that I allow myself to be intruded upon: and my duenna here has orders to deny me to all comers during my meals."

"But," I said, "suppose it to be an accident, where a few minutes gained might save the life of the patient: or a fit of apoplexy, or something of that sort."

"Well, sir, what then?" returned the doctor; "what then? 'Fore me this fellow speaks,' what's that to me, sir. There's Doctor Stirrit t'other side the way, let him try his skill."

"But he may be out," I said.

"And am I to put myself," he answered, "in the very situation of the knave who has sent for me, and fall down in a fit of that same 'whoreson apoplex' described by Galen, and under which the patient is lying (a wholesome example, a sort of *memento mori*), by being hurried out of my parlour here, *vino ciboque gravatus*. Not I, believe me; I am an old and infirm man myself, Mr. Blount, and have spent the better part of my life in foreign climes. No, no; I have no objection to do my best, as far as in me lies, to benefit my neighbours; but if they will dig their graves with their teeth, I cannot help it. Well, and so if you will not take anything more, we'll have half-an-hour's chat before we pay a visit to the Hall. You seem a favourite, Mr. Blount, with the good old dame, whose countenance, according to your own showing, you have so injured. Are your elegant friends yonder, relatives as well as admirers of yours? Excuse me, but what great ones do, the less will prattle of. You are not altogether unknown to me by name, and your reputation is gone rather like a jolting hackney-coach, (as Sancho has it,) and been tossed about like a tennis-ball. I expected to find in

Mr. Blount, instead of a quiet, unassuming young fellow, an imperious, haughty, overbearing puppy."

"Except," I replied, "by some youths of my own age, and whom I have met in the hunting-field, I am not known to many persons in the immediate neighbourhood. My father lives a very secluded life."

"That's wondrous pitiful," said the doctor, "in every sense; and perhaps, you are thought to set yourself above your neighbours hereabouts, on account of the oldness of your Norman shield: however, I cannot say you experience much loss, as society is constituted now-a-days. As for me, all I ask of the world is to avoid me; to say of me what they like, but leave me to enjoy my hours of idleness without interruption.—Here I am, as you see, with my farm, which estate being left me by a relative, was the cause of my exchanging. Here I am with my goats, as that capricious poet Ovid was amongst the Goths, 'content with my own harm; glad of other men's good, and the greatest of my pride is, to see my ewes graze, and my lambs suck.'"

"Such an one is a natural philosopher," I added, from the same play; and the doctor, who found in me a kindred spirit, and one who was nearly his match in knowledge of the Bard, grew more and more pleased with me as a *bon camarado*.

In short, the eccentric manners and pleasant society of this good man made a great impression upon me; and I laughed and chatted with him with the greatest delight. Though ever and anon, the statement I was sure that cat-tiff poacher would make, when brought before a magistrate for his attempt at shooting me, and the unlucky accident which happened in consequence, would seize me like some sudden pain, and, breaking the career of laughter with a sigh, spoil the enjoyment of the hour.

So sharp an observer as my host could not fail to perceive a mind ill at ease.

"Halloo!" said he, at last. "what the devil's wrong with you? 'Love on windy colic.' Why you change from Gray to Gay, from swipes to wine. Does the coffee pinch you, or is your 'mind diseased,' eh?"

It was not often that I had an opportunity of making a friend; here I found a man whose soul I could read in a moment. Under an exterior of much oddity and eccentricity, some roughness of manner, he possessed a disposition gentle as Zephyr; but directly the reverse, where he found rude treatment or worthless customers. To this new friend my heart warmed, and before I had left his hospitable table, I told him all my mishaps, and all my story. The doctor was a good deal puzzled at the account.

"There was a mixture of good and ill in my conduct," he

said; "but how I was to get through it all, and achieve the lady, it puzzled him to fathom. Here is a mine about to burst, if it has not already blown up," said he, "that will hoist you into the air, to begin with, and I suppose you know that if you mean to carry this lady off, it must be over the prostrate carcase of her other admirer. 'Not to flatter ye, you have as clear a case of battery as heart can wish;' but come what may, I am your friend, so long as you carry yourself uprightly. You are a good youth; I knew as much from the first glance, and I wish your credentials from the Horse-guards were arrived, and you yourself was fairly out of this neighbourhood."

CHAPTER XIII.

"You've read Shikspur, my lady?"

Never, my lord duke.

O, I love Shikspur.

Ah, well I'll read him some wet arternoon."

Actor's Version of "HIGH LIFE BELOW STAIRS."

"AND now, Mr. Blount," said the worthy doctor, rising, "for the next three hours I must leave you. Stay here and read Galen and Paracelsus, or anything else you can find on those book-shelves to amuse you; 'or in pure melancholy and troubled brain' wander over my farm; or view the wonders of the village: or, in fact, amuse yourself as best seemeth to yourself; only promise me to be present here again when my dinner is upon table, and which I shall give orders for, if agreeable, at five o' the clock."

Having accepted the good man's invitation, he called for his nag, in order to proceed on his visit to the Hall, and I accompanied him into the stable-yard, to see him mount.

His horse was brought out by a queer-looking nondescript animal, who officiated as groom and gardener, making, also, an occasional and vastly awkward footman. A short, square built, ill-favoured fellow, with herculean proportions, and a most infantine countenance; with cheeks puffed out as if he carried two eighteen-pound shots, by way of plumpers, and a colour in them deep as a peonei. There was evidently between master and man a deep-seated feud, and consequent continued state of hostility. They looked daggers at each other, as the old gentleman prepared to mount.

"Mr. Blount," said he, as he climbed with some difficulty into the saddle, "don't forget five o'clock. You, sir, Mister Frederick, attend in the house to-day: I've company."

"Wh-wh-why, zur," answered the gardener, with a York-

shire accent, and an extraordinary stutter, "I've three hosses four cows, besides the pigs at yard. Wh-wh-why, how can I come in at house?"

"Why, why, why," iterated the doctor, "let the cows take care of the horses, dolt, and the pigs can amuse each other."

"O de-ear, O dear!" stuttered the serving-man, "I can't abide waiting at teable, zur."

"Don't stand whoying and stuttering, like a hog in a high wind," said the doctor, "but let go my horse's rein and get out of the road."

"I bean't to wait at teable, zur; be I?" said the gardener, resolutely keeping his ground.

"Yes, I tell you, blockhead," returned the doctor; "you be——"

"Then dang me if I do it," stammered the servant: "O de-ar, I'm sure on't."

"Saw you ever the like of that," said the doctor, turning to me, "here's a fellow, with a stipend and a livery-cloak, thinks himself too good to serve ritt-master, Dugald Dalgetty, or Drumthwacket; quit the presence, hound," said he, addressing the groom, "either obey, or leave my service—you're the most ill-conditioned scoundrel in all Illyria!"

"Wh-wh-why, then, I'm sorry I ever came into it," returned the gardener, leaving his hold upon his master's rein, and stepping aside; "I'm no scoundrel: pay me my wages, and I'll go."

"Clear the course," said the doctor, clapping spurs to his horse, and almost capsizing his serving-man, by way of finale to the dispute, as he galloped off.

The serving-man felt discomfited and enraged. He stood looking after his master, his cheeks purple with rage; one arm a-kimbo, and his other hand pointing like a tea-kettle spout, and sputtering forth imprecations and threats, like that vessel when operated upon by a boiling heat.

After giving vent to a portion of his wrath, he turned and glanced at me from head to heel with a look of the most concentrated contempt; and then betaking himself to the garden, he commenced digging with fearful energy. Not a little amused at this pair of oddities, I returned into the house; and after passing a quiet half-hour in looking over the doctor's collection of prints, I then strolled to the little village hotel, where I had borrowed the unlucky guitar.

The fair owner of the instrument was profuse in her congratulations on my escape; the news of the adventure having reached her with the usual exaggeration of circumstance. The culprit, too, I heard, had been lodged in the stronghold of the village; and after whiling away another hour at the inn,

proceeded to make my way to Marston Hall. I found Miss Villeroy in a monstrous flutter. She had just received a letter from the Duchess of Hurricane, who was on her way to Marston from Scotland. The Earl of Moreton was also expected to arrive that day.

What with the unlucky accident which had happened, and the expected arrival of her visitors, she appeared excited and constrained in manner. She stood in great awe of her stately relative, the duchess; and I thought I could perceive a sort of secret dread of being chidden about the familiar footing I was upon in the family. It has ever been "my nature's plague to pry into abuses; and oft my jealousy shaped faults which were not." With some hauteur I arose to take my leave.

Miss Villeroy saw that I was offended. She rose from her seat, and presented me her hand.

"Do not leave me thus," she said; "I am unwell to-day. Last night's accident, and consequent want of rest, have unnerved me; when I have laid down for an hour or two, I shall recover. Meanwhile, remain here till Dr. Misaubin has seen his patient, and write me a copy of the serenade which has caused all this hurry, for my album."

I carried her hand to my lips, and she left the room.

For some minutes I paced up and down the apartment, in a state of mind by no means enviable, angry with myself, and out of sorts with all the world. That one cool reception had blown half my love to heaven.

I threw myself into a chair, and took pen in hand to write a copy of the serenade. I was at least ten minutes in getting through one line, whilst the paper I wrote on was scrawled all over with caricatures and hieroglyphics, and covered with unseemly blots.

"Master Ratcliffe Blount," said I to myself, "thou art an interloper here; your favour begins to warp at Marston."

I looked around me as I philosophized upon the matter, and questioned the propriety of allowing my passion to beat down the sense of pride and independence I had hitherto encouraged.

My thoughts recurred to Constance de Clifford. Would this have been the case if I had sought her love! No! that noble spirit would scarce have been afraid to own the feelings of her heart.—The usual violence of my feelings came upon me, and I resolved to write a farewell epistle to Miss Villeroy, and quit the neighbourhood for ever. Seizing my pen, I finished my verse, and commenced my letter. It was, however, much easier to begin than to finish to my own satisfaction. It was like the clown's letter to his sweetheart, in which, with all his invention, he could get no further than, "My dear Molly."

I arose and promenaded the apartment; that noble old room into which I had been first introduced when I came in such repudiation to Marston.

It was indeed a splendid apartment. The ample window-shutters bore the household coat on their panels. The elaborately carved mantelpiece, on which the cunning artists of old had exhausted their skill, might have adorned a regal palace. I remembered how often of late I had passed my time in that room, listening to the dulcet tones of its unmatched owner. Is all the council, methought, that we two have shared—the hours that we have spent,

“When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us—O, and is all forgot.”

With Lady de Clifford, too, I had here spent many a brilliant hour; here had we laughed with Touchstone; sighed o’er the deep sorrows of the Moor; moralized with Jacques, and envied the banished Duke and his exiled brothers their hunter life, their trees, their running brooks, and their sequestered banquet in the forest glade. To write my farewell epistle was impossible; I therefore tore it in pieces, and gave it to the winds, leaving my verses in its stead on Miss Villeroy’s open writing-case.

Time had flown while I had lingered here. It was evident Miss Villeroy did not wish to see me again, on that day at least.

“What ho!—within there, who waits?” I said, with a theatrical air, and a strut, as I threw open the door; “will you inform Dr. Misaubin I am here?”

“The doctor has been gone this hour, sir,” said the servant.

Looking at my watch, I found that it approached the hour I was invited forth to dinner. I therefore called for my steed, and took my departure from Marston.

Passing out through the ample hall, I paused to contemplate the richness and beauty of the park-like scene before me. ’Twas the scene of my departing joys I felt. A something whispered to me, as I looked along the dark avenue, with the deer lying clustered in the long grass, that my last visit had been paid at Marston. The feeling was not a pleasant one; I threw myself on the soft moss beneath one of the trees, and lay and contemplated the distant building.

Whilst I reclined, the sound of horses’ hoofs disturbed the deep solitude of the place. The herded deer started up, and bounded into the open chase, and the next minute two horsemen galloped rapidly past me, and alighted at the Hall.

The shade of the tree I reclined beneath hid me from their view; but as they passed, I thought I recognised in one of the cavaliers, my rival, Lord Hardenbrass.

The recognition was not calculated to add to my comfort. I arose, and mounting my steed, took my way towards the village of Woodville, as if an evil spirit had possessed me.

Arriving at Woodville, I found the good physician dozing in his easy chair, with spectacles on nose, and his favourite author on his knee.

"You come most carefully upon your hour," said he, starting up, "and I am glad on't. I like punctuality in men, particularly in young men. Blow upon that pipe beside you, and we will have the eatables instanter."

The pipe he mentioned was apparently belonging to a bag-pipe, and I afterwards found that it was a relic of the highland regiment to which he had belonged. It sent forth a shrieking note, and was promptly answered (somewhat to my surprise) by the offending groom, Frederick Elliot, now dressed to the level of the doctor's dining-room. He wore a green Jerry Hawthorn coat, and a countryman's red figured waistcoat, buckskin knee-breeches, clean white stockings, and his usual heavy hob-nailed boots, which had apparently gone through the operation of a hasty wipe over with a greasy dish-cloth, so that with feet thus encased, he made as much noise in his progress from parlour to kitchen, as if the statue of Don Giovanni, or one of his master's cart-horses, was plodding up and down stairs. I expressed my satisfaction to the doctor, that his man had thought twice on the subject of quitting so good a place, and doubtless had apologized for his behaviour.

"Who apologize?" said he, laughing; "not that scoundrel, Elliot. He would be torn with wild horses first. He has quarrelled with me, morning and night, any time these five years, that fellow. We perfectly detest each other; but the idea of parting never enters either of our heads. I have persuaded the drunken scoundrel that he would starve in a week if he was to leave me, and he stays here in his own despite. As for me, I could no more exist without him than I could without my bottle of black-strap after dinner. Here the wretch comes, clattering up stairs like the *Festin de Pierre*. Now, mark him, he'll spoil the look of as good a dinner as the Clarendon would turn out, by placing it on the table ill-favouredly. However, behave as he will, he'll not get me to dispute with him till it's over, that's a rule: we tiff it only morning and night."

Mine host offered no empty boast, when he affirmed that the repast he had provided was as good and neat a turn-out as the Clarendon could have sent up. Whatever means the old housekeeper possessed in the regions below, whether she employed man or woman cook, I know not; but, for well-seasoned and accurately-dressed viands, I think the doctor's table could have vied with that of the most fastidious epicures in the kingdom.

"It was one of his weaknesses," he said, "to see a dinner daily served up, which would have satisfied the eye of Justice

Greedy himself. Still, he was no gourmand, but, on the contrary, rather abstemious in his living. Barring a bottle of port a day, Monsieur Blount," said he, "I am not an indulger in the good things of life, and although I love to sit down to a well-filled board, (for both the one and the other, I have been used to find at mess from my youth upwards,) yet I seldom taste of more than one dish, and only temperately of that. 'Fat paunches make lean pates,' as that wondrous writer of my idolatry hath it, and I quite agree with the man, who wrote some century and a-half back, that he never sat down to a well-filled table, but he saw all the various diseases incident to 'this piece of work, man,' lying perdue beside each seasoned dish of viands on the board. However, this is strange language wherewith to encourage a guest to eat, and more befitting the discourse of Don Pedro Positive, at the table of the chagrined governor of Barataria. You see, I am, notwithstanding my words, full of performance myself. Come, now that specimen of liveried lacqueys has carried his leaden heels out of the room, and descended for the pippins and cheese, we'll have another glass of champagne.—Here's to the grace and ornament of female society; the beauty of the county (we'll no names): the radiant and unmatchable; the Olivia of Yorkshire!—Ah! Sir Blount, what a creature is there! I have looked upon the world these threescore and ten years, and I never saw so exquisitely beautiful a woman as the one we drink to. She is the only personation in figure, face, grace, and appointments, to the Olivia of Shakspeare, I ever beheld. I thought, with Duke Orsino (when she entered the room at Marston Hall this morning)—'now heaven walks on earth!' Come, don't be sad and silent, the moment I begin to praise the goddess of your idolatry: let us turn the conversation. Sound the pipe beside you, and refresh the memory of that beef-head, Elliot. Ah! Shakspeare, Shakspeare," he continued, "what a god-like creature thou must have been. Shakspeare, Mr. Blount, has been my only book for the last twenty years of my life; and no single day of my life, since I first opened his page, have I omitted to pay him a visit. I am altogether lost in astonishment at the extraordinary, the wonderful, and the (elsewhere) unheard-of. Never was there, sir, so comprehensive a talent as that of Shakspeare. Rank, sex, age, king, hero, outlaw, idiot, murderer, soldier, sailor, monster, and ghost, all speak and act with equal reality. The distant age, and foreign nation, he brings before you so truly, that you live in another world as you read. The ancient Roman, the French and English in their wars, even the very walls they fought under, he alone has made as palpable to our eyes, as if we had lived a former life, and been actors and participators in the stirring scene. 'Athens ripe for stroke' he pictures to the

very life. The amiable Timon, too, banqueting in a marble palace, his lobbies filled with tendance, and sacrificial whisperings rained in his ear, is as happily described as the same man (disgusted at the society and friendship he has discerned to be 'merely poison') when naked and exposed in a wild and dismal forest, we find him scorning the yellow slave, and asking nothing (on this side the grave) but roots, 'Roots, ye clear heavens! earth yield me roots.'

'Fear and piety,
Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth,
Domestic awe, night-rest, and neighbourhood
Instructions; manners, mysteries, and trade;
Degrees, observances, customs, and laws.'

"All and everything, this wondrous man talks as familiarly about 'as maids of thirteen do of puppy dogs.' Come, another cup of wine," continued the lively doctor."

'Do me right,
And dub me knight
Samingo.'

"Is't not so? Why then, say an old man can do something. Clear all away," he called to his footman, "and take thy face hence. And now, Mr. Blount, let's have your opinion of that port. By the mass, we'll crack a quart together. Ha!"

"Be I to bring in coffee and cigars now, Zur, or wait till you blows up," inquired the serving-man, opening the door, and putting his head into the room.

"When I sound upon the pipe, dolt," said the doctor; "and d'ye hear, let in the dogs, Blanch, Tray, and Sweetheart, and shut yourself out."

The old gentleman's bottle of port was excellent; when we had finished it, he called for coffee and cigars, and returned to his favourite subject, Shakspeare. "For no other author, Mr. Blount," said he, "does one feel the inadequacy of language to find sufficient praise. I laud him 'with a powerless tongue;' but with a heart filled with unstained love; for what, sir, can we say of one so wondrous, that no tongue but his own, no language but his own, can describe him?—

'Hear him but reason on divinity,
And all-admiring, with an inward wish,
You would desire the bard were made a prelate;
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
You would say, it hath been all in all his study:
List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
A fearful battle, rendered you in music:
Turn him to any cause of policy,

The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
 Familiar as his garter. When he speaks,
 The air, a chartered libertine, is still ;
 And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears
 To steal his sweet and honied sentences.'"

The doctor was now fairly mounted upon his Pegasus, his hobby; next to pottering about his farm, he loved to descant upon and talk scholarly and wisely of his favourite, Shakspeare.

"He is a Prometheus, sir," he continued, "as some one somewhere says. He not only forms men, and in half a line shows us their dispositions, faults, virtues, nay, the very oddities of their manners; in fact, brings us as intimately acquainted, as though we had been familiar with them 'from fourteen to fourscore, and upwards;' and which I will maintain no other author has effected, or could accomplish, in twenty set speeches; but he calls up the mighty dead, exhibits before us the midnight ghost of Danish ground, peoples the air with spirits, and makes the gentle sea breeze of a lovely and enchanted island steal over our ears, and fan us with the almost inaudible melody of unearthly music. He brings us again, in a single line, upon the comfortless and trackless wastes of Scotland, making the bleak winds kiss our cheek, as we march towards Fores; intercepts us with his unhallowed witches, and their infernal mysteries; and all these creatures of his imagination possess a truth and consistency, that we are convinced, had there been really such beings, and monsters, and spirits, they would have so spoken, and so conducted themselves. Then, for matters connected with these latter times, for once I agree with one of his commentators, that if, instead of bothering and puzzling their brains with politics, reading debates in both Houses of Parliament, or studying Burke or Tom Paine, men would content themselves with Coriolanus; there will they find a whole library of political common-places."

"You have doubtless seen," I said, "most of the great actors of your time, Dr. Misauhin?"

"There you are wrong in your supposition," he replied. "I never was fond of 'sitting at a play.' Nay more, I never was at above three plays in my life; and for this reason,—I once went to see Macbeth. It was the first play I had ever witnessed;—need I say I was utterly disgusted. I went, sir, to observe, and actually expecting to see, a poor macerated actor look like the man who had encountered the weird sisters. I forgot I was going to Covent Garden, and actually expected to see the heath at Fores. After this, I resolved never again to see a play; at least, never to witness the performance, so called, of one of Shakspeare's plays. I was, however, beguiled again, and went to see 'As you like it.' Oh, sir, 'for Shakspeare's sake,' never put yourself in a situation to have your im-

agings on the knowledge and perusal of that play, destroyed. Never disenchant the forest of Arden! No, Mr. Blount, I have no objection to Filch picking pockets in the 'Beggar's Opera;' but I hope never to see the weird sisters,—those 'secret, black, and midnight hags,' whose very first encounter with Macbeth spell-bound him and swayed his destiny, represented by two or three ill-looking scene-shifters, wretchedly ill furnished with red rags, shreds, and patches, and as many stable-brooms to horse upon. I have no dislike to theatrical representation in general, and can see the productions of other authors with pleasure;—nay, I have been greatly amused by witnessing those poor devil performances at our country fairs. I saw 'Virginius' at our fair here, a couple of months back; nay, Appius Claudius dined with me in this very apartment, and died in the room above stairs."

"Indeed!" said I: "that was singular."

"You must know, sir," continued the doctor, "that one of these booths was a penny theatre; and I was especially struck with the utter misery of the whole company, as they played their parts upon the platform, in order to beguile the audience into their tent. I could have advised them to turn melancholy forth to funerals; but I saw they lacked not only the attributes of actors, but were many days in arrear of a meal; they lacked the *vis vitæ*. Nothing, indeed, could be more mirthless than the sickly smiles of Monsieur Merryman, and the want of alacrity of the harlequin. Wondering at these 'faint stars,' I entered, and witnessed the performance. Appius Claudius was performed by the principal tragedian. This Roman wore a garb quite different from what we have been used to see or hear of, as the costume of the descendants or countrymen of Romulus and Remus. He was dressed in a ploughman's Sunday waistcoat (none of the newest or cleanest) a world too wide for his emaciated body. On his postique parts he wore the cast-off knee breeches of a footman, and his toes were visible through his well-worn pumps. He had but one eye, the socket of the other being scantily covered by a few straggling hairs, combed down from his wig. The wig itself was a study for an artist, if, indeed, it was a wig; for in appearance it much more resembled the corner torn from a well-trodden door-mat. Appius Claudius was certainly dying—and I saw it. On the following day the fair was over. Whilst the company of the caravan made their preparatory arrangements for their march, I fell in with them on the common, and was asked to step into their booth, and look on the principal performer, who was suffering from the previous day's exertion. In Appius Claudius I found one whom I had formerly known well, and served with in foreign lands. He had been promoted in a regiment of the line for merit; and had

risen from the ranks to an ensigncy. Yes, sir, he was one of those instances, showing how seldom promotion of this sort, to the rank of a commissioned officer, is of real benefit to the individual soldier in our service. Appius Claudius was a brave man (we'll still call him by his Roman name, if you please, Mr. Blount), and till he became serjeant-major had conducted himself with so much credit and renown, that no man in the service was better thought of. But when he once attained the 'topmost round of fortune's ladder,' he began to scorn 'the base degrees by which he did ascend.' It is strange, but not singular in such cases, that Appius Claudius, like his namesake, was a tyrant too, and an oppressor of those beneath him, and arrogant and unbearable to the officers with whom he had been promoted. I was in that dreadful retreat to Corunna with him. We both served in the same regiment; that regiment in which he before had 'trailed the puissant pike.' A better soldier in battle or in hardship never stepped; but in quarters he was not endurable; and ultimately lost his commission. He turned duellist, sir, and became a perfect nuisance in the corps. Not only was he pugnacious himself, but the cause of serious disturbance and eternal quarrel amongst others. When I tell you that in several of these encounters, the wife of Claudius was the acting and exciting cause, you will conceive, sir, that lady to have been as lovely as the virgin for whose possession the Roman Appius went such unwarrantable lengths."

"Exactly so," said I.

"Sir, 'twas no such thing; for the spouse of our Appius was nearly as hideous as that Asturian wench of Cervantes, who distilled vermilion with one eye, and brimstone with the other. She had been promoted, together with her husband, he having married her at Portsmouth, when a private. The station she attained to it was difficult for her to fill with propriety, and consequently the husband was eternally embroiled. She was 'an Até stirring him to blood and strife;' and at length so thoroughly embroiled her husband, that he deservedly lost his commission. Our indulgent commander-in-chief permitted him, however, to sell out; and, with this money, he entered into the publican business. 'Twas a life more suited to his taste; and, for a time, he wielded the spiggot with success. His wife, however, drank up all the spirits, liquors, and profits: so, to drown reflection, he took to drinking himself, until at last he came to the situation in which I found him. In fine, I took compassion on my sometime companion in arms, whom I should never have recognised in the wreck before me, had he not made himself known, and I had him conveyed to my house here. I also did what I could for the *dramatis personæ* of the 'wagon of the company of death.' He rallied for a

few days under my care, but at last sank like one of the flickering footlights of his own theatre. And now, Mr. Blount, govern me the vantages of the pipe before you, and sound out that we are ready for tea, since I perceive your chalice has been unfilled the whole time I have been telling this long-winded story."

CHAPTER XIV.

Benvolio.—By my head, here come the Capulets.

Mercutio.—By my heel, I care not.

Tybalt.—Gentlemen, good den; a word with one of you.

Mercutio.—And but one word with one of us? Couplet it with something; make it a word and a blow.

SHAKSPERE.

THE flourish I gave upon the instrument was answered by a reveille upon the street door. The old gentleman started, turned his head, and set his wine-glass upon the table, whilst the olive which he was about to wash down with it stuck in his throat like the "amen" of his favourite Thane.

"I'll not be interrupted to-night," said he, sharply. "I'll not be molested in my retirement—in the loveliness of my private life—in my *otium cum dignitate*—no; not if the Mayor of Grimsby be taken ill. Oh! if that Yorkshire Tyke dare to say I am accessible, I'll have his stupid brains beaten out with billets."

The serving-man, however, seemed either not to stand in proper awe of his master, or the new comer was not to be denied; for, after a considerable altercation without, he entered the room, and announced that some one wanted to see "At doctor, oh dear, he was sure on't!"

"You caitiff, how came you to say I was at home?" croaked his master.

"A' know'd a' was at whoam, a' said," returned the serving-man.

"What kind of a thing is it?" inquired the suffering Esculapius.

"Why—why—why—it's a mon."

"It's a man, is it?" said the doctor, with the calmness of concentrated rage. "A south fog rot ye! What manner of man, servant-monster?"

"Why—why, I told 'e it was a mon. Oh dear, I'm sure I did," returned the irritable footman.

"What height, Chops?" said his master, setting his teeth in rage.

"Why—why—a tall thin mon, about t'height of that chop there, or mayhap bigger," answered the servant, pointing to me.

"What face, dolt?" asked the other.

"Why—why—a feace like his'n, too," returned the servant, "only he have a gotten as much hair under his nose as above it. Ha! ha! oh dear, I'm sure on't."

"What kind of eyes, thou clay-brained guts?" said the doctor.

"Why, he squints," returned his man, "like a picture; always seems a looking at yer, and never is."

"What has he on his head, thou knotty-pated fool?"

"Why, his hat, to be sure," answered the man, sharply.

"Now, don't'e call I such dreadful names, zur, doan't."

"Round his neck?" continued the doctor, quickly.

"A black shiny handkerchief."

"On his legs?" said the doctor, rising from his seat.

"Why—why—I can't tell everything the mon have a gotten. Mayhap it's boots, mayhap it's shoes."

With Tarquin strides, and bent nearly double, did Doctor Machaon Misaubin make the half circle of his dining-table, and approaching on tip-toe the closed door, applied his eye to the keyhole, in order to reconnoitre this pest and disturber of his comfort.

"Son of Atropos! I know thee now," said he, as he drew himself up from his doubled-up position, and came to the right-about, like a soldier upon parade. "This is what I expected; but it has come upon us somewhat of the soonest. Mr. Blount, there is a hero yonder. The man I know; and from the tale you have told me this morning, I suspect his errand. I shall not be called out to-night; heaven send the same luck to you! 'The day is hot, the Capulets abroad.' This visitor, and who I expected was some one of my tedious village patients, is the intimate of my Lord Hardenbrass, a man with whom I am myself not on good terms. His visit here must therefore be to you. You, Sir Fieri Facias," said he to his servant, "what made you say the gentleman without there asked for me, when he inquired for Mr. Blount?"

"Why—why, I said nothing o' th' sort," returned Elliot. "He told I he know'd you were at hoame, and that he wanted to see Muster Ratcliffe Blount; and told I to give un his ticket. There a'be," he said, producing a card.

"Hand it here, you rustic mountaineer," said his incensed master. "This is the way you always behave."

The doctor snatched the card, glanced at it, and handed it to me.

"Show the gentleman in here, sirrah," he said. "We are not obliged to suspect his errand, Mr. Blount."

The doctor was, indeed, like the old war-horse. He sniffed the encounter, and he longed to be mixed up in it; moreover, he mistrusted my knowledge of the world, and wished to be at my elbow, in case the matter was serious, as he suspected.

The stranger entered the room, a tall gentlemanly-looking person. He was evidently a military man, as his card had announced, and it was as easy to perceive, at a glance, that he belonged to the cavalry.

He was upwards of six feet in height, broad at the shoulders, and wasp-like at the waist. His dress was the plainest of the plain, being a brown afternoon coat, buttoned up to the chin, and wide dark trousers;—not a particle of linen was visible, except about a quarter of an inch of the wristband of his shirt. In feature he was extremely handsome: and (but that he carried in his look an air of the most assured superiority and hauteur,) he might have been called exceedingly agreeable and pleasing at first sight. There was nothing of the military fop about him, as might have been observed in a cavalry officer of Austria, Prussia or France. But he showed, as indeed all high-bred military men in the British army invariably do, that in getting out of harness, he had entirely divested himself of the barrack, the guard-room, and the parade; and that although *toujours soldat*, he was yet able to be the private gentleman at any time.

I rose to receive him. The doctor, however, sat still in his chair, returned his bow haughtily, and desired him to be seated. The major declined sitting down, and immediately entered upon his business.

“I am here, Mr. Blount,” said he, addressing me, “for I believe I am speaking to Mr. Ratcliffe Blount, of Wharncliffe Grange?”

“You are quite right, sir,” I answered; “Blount is my name—the Grange my residence.”

“I am here then, Mr. Blount,” resumed Major Belcour, “on an unpleasant business, which we had better discuss, perhaps, in private. Dr. Misaubin will favour us by permitting me to hold a few minutes’ conversation with you alone.”

“By all means, gentlemen,” said the doctor; “make what use you please of my poor dwelling. Pipe all hands, Mr. Blount, for my scoundrel to take candles into the drawing-room.”

I thought I could perceive, by the old gentleman’s manner, that he was disappointed.

“This gentleman, Major Belcour,” I observed, “is my excellent and valued friend. Whatever business you may have to treat of may be freely discussed in his presence, as I, indeed, have no secrets with which he has not been made acquainted.”

"In that case, sir," said the major, sitting down, "I conceive he is your friend in this matter. I come here, on the part of Lord Hardenbrass, and doubt not that you have been, for some time, in expectation of such a communication. If I am to understand Dr. Misaubin is to be your friend on this occasion, I can have no possible objection to his presence."

I was not prepared to say so much as that, as I had never thought upon the subject, but the doctor struck in to my assistance—

"I am quite at Mr. Blount's service, Major," said he, "either as friend or physician. If the young gentleman will appoint me his adviser, I'll not balk him. So now, out with your news, and let's have this horrid mystery and terrible grievance."

The major gave an angry glance at him, as much as to say, "I know you for a troublesome customer of old:" and proceeded with his embassy.

"By desire of Lord Hardenbrass, then," said he, "I have to request the favour of your informing me (in the first instance) whether this document is acknowledged by you as your composition and handwriting?"

In saying this he handed me a well-filled sheet of writing-paper, gilt-edged, and lettered, in glancing at which I found these words, by way of a commencement:—

"You sleep—and o'er your slumbers light,
May happy visions play;
And people thy soft dreams at night,
With all the joys of day."

It was, indeed, a copy of my eternal serenade, which I had written out, and left for Miss Villeroy that morning. I fancy I must have looked, as I felt, an egregious ass.

"You are of course," continued the major, "aware of the consequence of addressing such stanzas, as the one you hold in your hand, to the affianced bride of my friend. He has, therefore, desired me to inform you that you must either discontinue your attentions in that quarter, or accept the alternative."

"My life as soon!" I returned. "These verses are mine;—except from their unworthiness, I glory in having written them; and unless desired by the lady herself not to do so, I will write a sonnet whenever the Muses will favour me with their assistance."

"I also will rhyme you so," said the doctor, rubbing his hands with glee; "eight years together, dinner and supper and sleeping hours excepted.—Psha! Major Belcour, you don't mean to say that you have paid us a visit this evening, to tell this young gentleman here, my friend, that he is not to profit

by the gift of the gods (in making him poetical), unless you and Lord Hardenbrass choose to allow it?"

"I mean to say, sir," returned the major, drily, "that under the circumstances of the case, Mr. Blount has no right or title to address such verse as this to the young lady in question. I mean to say, sir, that having acknowledged to me what he has just now done, I request he will state whether or not I am correct in supposing *you* are the friend he wishes to act for him in this unpleasant affair, as Lord Hardenbrass is obliged to return to his regiment forthwith, having left it without leave, the moment he was informed what was doing in his absence here."

"You mean to say," said the doctor, "'because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?' We'll try that question, Major; and although I deny the right of your principal to call out a gentleman upon these grounds, I have not served so long in the British army without knowing that when a man is called out, he must go. Ergo, the sooner the better."

The old gentleman rose from his chair, and taking my arm, led me to the other end of the room.—"This is an ugly business," said he, "you'll be shot without benefit of clergy. Supposing, from your account this morning, that you have no acquaintance sufficiently experienced, I have volunteered to be your friend. Lord Hardenbrass is a duellist—a duellist, sir, 'a gentleman of the first house,' ah, 'the immortal passado, the punto reverso! the hay!' He's a crack shot, Mr. Blount; do you know anything of pistolling?"

"Not much," said I; "I never practised; but I can bring down a buck with a rifle ball."

"And Wat Tyler's mark, too, as Locksly hath it: I'm glad you have not practised. We're in the hands of heaven, whether we are fighting the enemy, or perpetrating the duello. Bad as such transaction may be, '*nihil accidit sine ejus permissione*,' as the school book saith. Leave me to arrange matters here. Say your prayers and farewell; you'll sleep here to-night, and I shall have it entered upon to-morrow morning, if the arrangements are completed."

I squeezed the old man's hand, for this piece of kindness, which was, indeed, more than one in a hundred at his time of life would have offered, and left him to confer with the major upon the subject.

A first duel is a somewhat serious business to a youngster, let him have as much nerve as most men. For, although, unlike Bob Acres, we may fear little for our personal safety, the thought of going out quietly to execute, or be executed, without finding in the heart one particle of hatred, enmity, or ill-feeling towards our opponent, every moment increases our

dislike to the business in hand. The duello, as it was even a few short years ago transacted, being fought with the weapon of our ancestors, the sword, then constantly worn, was in many cases the instant righter of the wrong; and was, perhaps, a much more pleasant matter to be engaged in; but the ceremony of being placed at stated distance to shoot vulgarly at an antagonist with a pistol, appears not fit for the settlement of the disputes of the gentry of Old England, and only suitable to bushrangers and savage Indians. "Ah, the immortal passado," as the doctor had it, "the punto reverso! the hay!" those were the days.

What my thoughts were on this occasion, I do not now remember. I did not care much as it regarded myself, but still saw that I was fighting under every disadvantage. It would be highly disastrous for me to kill my antagonist: whilst I had reason to be pretty certain, that he would not rest satisfied till he had winged me at least—most likely indeed, from his excellence at his weapon, perforated my heart or lungs; and that, as Sir Brilliant Fashion has it, would be a scrape indeed. In fact, I saw no agreeable termination to the affair. It was a fog which I could not look through, therefore resolved to think no more about the matter; in a few hours more and it would be all over one way or other. In one thing I was fortunate, the doctor was a knowing hand, and I considered myself extremely happy in having made the acquaintance of one so kind-hearted, and apparently so bold, that he dared in everything to act exactly as he thought fit.

The doctor, indeed, as I dare say the reader has by this time discovered, was no common person. He was a man, whose style of life was much cavilled at by the common-place. Some said he was an infidel, others pronounced him vulgar in manner, and coarse and abrupt in conversation; and except by the few who really knew his sterling worth, he was considered an ill-bred, and even ill-tempered fellow. Mankind have indeed been forced to invent a kind of artificial humanity, which is what we express by the word good-breeding. Few, moreover, except amongst the higher circles, have the slightest conception of the meaning of the term. With some of the county families, therefore, at whose houses the old gentleman chose to visit, he was a particular favourite: but amongst the lesser gentry and the small fry of the village, he was as greatly disliked. Perhaps no man, with means so small, was a greater friend to the poor around him. He would, at any time, ride twenty miles to see a half-starved beggar, if really in danger, in preference to visiting a rich patient, if slightly unwell. Of the poor, also, he always refused to take any recompence: nay, would send them clothing, wine, and other comforts, from his own home: yet, strange to say, even amongst the poor, our

doctor was not always a favourite, and well did he know he was not, though it never made him alter his conduct towards them. The poor, he told me, he had found proverbially ungrateful. Their lot was a sad one, hard toil and evil communication soured their dispositions and hardened their hearts. Anything beneath the grade of a substantial farmer was sure to be a churl.

“’Twas strange, ’twas pitiful, but ’twas true.”

The doctor was in reality a man of great worth, notwithstanding the prejudice against him; a gentleman by birth, true to religion, and true to honour; he was also a scholar, and a soldier; had fought under the banners of the Great Duke, had been severely wounded in the hot East: endured fever and climate in the sugar islands of the West; gone through the toils of the Peninsular war; and, in fact, had endured difficulties and hardships (which would have broken the spirit of many men) not only with fortitude, but with mirth and good humour.

Leaving the old gentleman’s house, I desired the serving man, Elliot, to say that I would be in waiting at the village inn. There in the little sanded parlour I had the day before dined in, I awaited him. How much methought had happened to me in the last few weeks of my existence!

I seemed to have suddenly grown old, and the freshness of my feeling to have left me. But the other day, my heart was buoyant with vigour, undepressed by care, and every scene gilded with pleasure and enjoyment. The sheep-bell on the hills, the waterfall in the valley, the distant watch-dog, the cawing of the rookery—all and everything regarded by me with delight. Now, however, I seemed no longer to find pleasure in my old, or look forward with satisfaction or hope in my new pursuits. That most fantastic of passions, which, some one observes, can never be fully felt but once, and when once felt can never be forgotten, possessed me wholly, and somehow or other seemed to have made shipwreck of all my enjoyment of life.

Whilst I ruminated, Doctor Misaubin arrived. “Well, sir,” said I, with something of the tone and manner of a man, who felt himself rather harshly treated by my Lady Fortune, “how have you arranged this meeting?”

“You speak,” returned he, “like one writ in sour misfortune’s page, and indifferent on the matter. The affair, Mr. Blount, is thus far arranged: I have fixed to-morrow morning at six o’clock for the time, and Fulbrook meadow on my farm for the place.”

“Good,” I said, “be it so; and now let’s talk of something else.” After we had spent about an hour in conversation, we

returned together to his house; and after having put his pistols in order, showed me their make, and descanted on their virtues, (it being then late,) he begged of me to retire, assuring me that he should himself remain up all night, and would call me before daylight in the morning.

CHAPTER XV.

“This gentleman,
My very friend, hath got his mortal hurt
In my behalf.”

SHAKSPERE.

I THREW myself on the bed, and notwithstanding the unpleasant thoughts which intruded themselves, soon fell into a deep slumber, from which I did not awake until aroused by a rap at my chamber door, and the entrance of my host.

“Come,” said he, “I have allowed you to repose till the last moment; there is no time to spare. ‘The early village cock hath thrice done salutation to the morn.’”

I jumped out of bed immediately, thrust my head into the wash-hand basin, made a hasty toilette, and we sallied forth together.

In any other circumstances, I should have felt inclined to smile at our present equipage. Myself, at this early hour, brushing the dew from the grass, and, *nolens volens*, without a particle of ill-humour or hostile feeling, going out, a complete greenhorn, to fight a duel with a practised hand, under guidance and patronage of a village Esculapius, who looked old enough to be my grandfather! The said ‘Great Medicine,’ enveloped in an old military cloak of blue cloth, ornamented with what had once been a red collar, arm-holes having been cut subsequent to its build, for the purpose of riding comfortably on horseback in it; a shocking bad foraging cap upon his head, which, being pulled down over his ears, and nearly meeting the beforesaid stand-up collar, left nothing visible of the wearer’s features but his fiery proboscis, and an occasional sparkle of his brilliant eye. Thus equipped, then, and with his pistol-case under one arm and his gold-headed cane in his other hand, the worthy doctor strode forth, and I followed him. Determination was in his step as he hurried on, and in his own mind he doubtless felt that he was doing as praiseworthy an act in thus accompanying a greenhorn to the field, and acting as guardian, both of his honour and safety, by the knowledge he had acquired in buffeting about the world, as though he had been attending a sick patient gratis, relieving a lame mendicant, enduring an hour’s infliction of the village

parson's saw, or indeed, doing any other recognised good action.

We crossed the meadow adjoining, and entering a plantation of firs, proceeded along it, till we came upon the farm.

"Heaven's breath smells wooingly here: the air is delicate," said the doctor, stopping, as we reached the appointed ground. "We are, you see, the first a-field, and 'down yonder at the homestead, where you hear the cock crowing, there is as yet no signs of the business of life. 'Man's o'er-laboured sense repairs itself by rest.' This is our ground, and right glad am I that we have reached it, for this cloak and these pistols have made me sweat like a day-labourer. Look out, Mr. Blount! —pshaw! man, not in the direction we have just come. Look towards the road leading to Marston Hall; you've looked that way often enough before to-day, or we should scarcely be here at this hour, and on such an errand."

Saying this, the doctor put down his pistol-case upon the grass, and quietly seating himself upon it, took out his cigar-case, struck a light, and proceeded to ignite his Havannah.

"Oh! solace of the wounded heart!" he began; "my excellent cigar!—

' Sublime tobacco, which from east to west,
Cheers the tar's labour, and the Turkman's rest.'"

Doubtless he would have treated himself and me to a whole litany upon his favourite weed, had I not announced that our opponents were approaching; and accordingly Lord Hardenbrass, and his friend Major Belcour, having dismounted, and secured their horses, quickly joined us.

A belt of firs hid the meadows in which we were from view of the road, so that the ground was well-chosen in all respects.

The doctor, spectacles on nose, was busied in taking out and preparing his instruments, as they came up. Both raised their hats, and I returned their salutation. The old gentleman, however, merely bending his head, so as to get a glimpse at them over his glasses, bade them good morning, without discontinuing his employment. He was, perhaps, as good a specimen of what is termed 'a cool hand' as could well be met with. My opponent's second, meanwhile, produced and made ready his weapons, and we were then, without further circumstance, posted on our different stations, having the benefit of the usual allowance of paces between us.

Not a word, meanwhile, had been addressed by Lord Hardenbrass either to myself or friend. He was apparently, in his own conceit, too great, and too much injured, to honour either of us by giving even the salutation of the morn. He spoke a word or two to his second, after taking his ground, and looked me steadily in the face.

"Keep your eye firmly fixed upon him," whispered the doctor, as he left my side.

The pistols were now in our hands, and we awaited the signal. It was quickly given, and we both fired. I believe I owe my life to my second's advice, and the unflinching look I kept upon my adversary's eye. His ball passed through my neck-handkerchief, and slightly wounded my neck, whilst mine went wide of the mark.

Major Belcour and Dr. Misaubin immediately approached. The former was desired by his principal, to ask me if I still intended to persevere in my attentions at the Hall. I denied his right to propose the question.

"Give me the other pistol, Major Belcour," said his lordship; "the affair must go on, I see."

"I see nothing of the sort, Major Belcour," said the doctor. "I conceive Mr. Blount has given reasonable satisfaction here. An exchange of shots is all that was necessary in such a case. The field is as open for one candidate as the other. The affair, my lord, permit me to suggest, with all deference, is now entirely out of your hands. The lady herself is the better person to engage with, whichever of the swains she most affects. '*Utrum horum mavis accipe*,' as we used to say at Westminster."

"Your ideas upon the subject," returned his lordship, with some warmth, "are as impertinent as you yourself are ungentlemanlike in mentioning the lady, as you have this moment done; for which you may consider yourself properly chastised, without my degrading myself by the infliction."

"Now, the red pestilence strike thee for an inordinate ass!" said the old gentleman, in violent rage. "By heaven! you shall answer that affront, ere you leave this ground. Major Belzebub, your principal is unsatisfied, is he?"

"He is, sir," returned the Major, haughtily.

"Take your weapon, Mr. Blount," said the doctor, stepping to me, and handing the pistol. "I will indulge 'this courageous captain of compliments,' for once. I give the signal this time, Major Belcour. Ready. One, two, three," shouted the old man, without stirring a foot from my side, or giving his brother second time to get out of the way either.

Although this was not quite regular, we both obeyed the signal, fired, and again were both unhurt. Again I owed the doctor a life.

"Are you touched this time?" said he to me. "Come, it's lucky you are not."

"His lordship insists upon going on," said the Major. "He is still unsatisfied."

"Is he, sir?" returned the old gentleman, proceeding with alacrity, to load the pistols again. "Then, well may I,—as the

poor Lieutenant of Sterne has it. He *shall* be indulged in another shot, Major Belcour," he continued, as soon as he had prepared the weapons; "but this time, if he shoot at all, it must be at me, sir. I will not permit this youth here to be fired at, like a pigeon, for his peculiar satisfaction any longer. Mr. Blount," he continued, turning to me, "a small exchange of civilities makes life pass agreeably, as my Lord Ogleby has it. Do you now perform that office for me which I have just done for you. Major Belcour, I expect satisfaction from that walking ferocity there, for the gratuitous insult he has just conferred upon me. I will not permit your principal to fire another shot at my friend, 'that's the humour of it.' If you still continue his lordship's second in this second business, place your man. Here is my ground; I stand here for justice."

The major and his friend consulted for a few minutes, and at length Lord Hardenbrass, taking his stand where he had before fired from, the doctor remaining upon my former station we stepped aside, after agreeing upon a signal, which the major this time gave, and duel number two proceeded.

Unhappily, both shots took effect, and quick almost as the reports of their weapons, both the principals lay sprawling upon the greensward. I gazed for an instant with dismay from one to the other, and then hastening to Dr. Misaubin, knelt down, and raised him in a sitting posture.

"My excellent young friend," said he, with difficulty, "I am fairly sped this bout. I have it, and that soundly too."

I was so deadly shocked and confounded at this catastrophe and misfortune to my friend, who, indeed, I had begun to love with almost filial affection, that I could scarcely speak to him, and forgot, for the moment, that there was another sufferer on the ground, only a few paces from me.

"Let me down again," screamed the doctor. "For heaven's sake, lay me down easily. A curse upon the man, he has cut me in half! 'Is he gone and hath nothing,' as Mercutio says. Oh, bullets and triggers! my back bone is broken in twain!" The pain was now so great, that, together with loss of blood, he fainted in my arms.

"Help, Major Belcour, help!" I cried, starting up, and running to him, "unless we get some assistance quickly, I fear my friend will die, if he is not already gone."

"We are in a scrape here," said the Major, who, on one knee, was supporting Lord Hardenbrass—"My friend is also, I fear, mortally wounded. Doctor Misaubin insisted last night, that no surgeon was necessary on the ground, as he himself was sufficient for the occasion; doubtless, little suspecting that, by becoming a principal himself, he would leave us in such a dilemma as this."

"Do me the favour to look in the direction of the farm, and see if you can observe any of the labourers about in the field."

As I could see no one near, he advised me to run immediately to the farm-yard to get assistance, and at the same time despatch a messenger for the village surgeon.

Accordingly I flew back to the doctor, who, I perceived, was now recovering from his swoon, and placing his old cloak under his head by way of pillow, made off, fast as I could run, towards the farm.

I flew like a Pawnee Indian across the fields, taking hedge and ditch in my progress, till I reached the farm-yard. With one bound I cleared the palings, and was seized by the doctor's mastiff, which happened to be kennelled just on the spot where I alighted, and it required all my efforts to prevent him from throttling me. The fellow pistol to the one which Dr. Misauvin had fired with, was in my hand, which I was unconscious of, until I found myself defending my life with it against this powerful brute, by thrusting the barrel into his jaws. Despite my efforts, however, to get free from him, the faithful animal held me fast, and I found it impossible to extricate myself without destroying him.

Cocking, therefore, the pistol, I discharged it down his savage throat.

The noise of my encounter with the mastiff aroused some of the labourers of the farm, who hastening to the spot, instantly surrounded me. Seeing their guardian in the agonies of death, and a man armed and looking wildly, rising conqueror from the encounter, they made at me with the weapons which they had snatched up on the alarm, and I found myself accordingly, delivered from one action only to commence upon another. Assailing me with imprecations and blows, they would fain have beaten me to the earth first, and then inquired into the justice of such measure, after I was unable to explain the cause of my intrusion. It was in vain for me to cry out to them to desist. They out-tongued my complaints, and taking me, I suppose, for a burglar or a madman just escaped from his keepers, with a deadly weapon in his gripe, they seemed determined to make their capture in the safest way to themselves, by rendering me incapable of doing more mischief. Whilst I fought an unequal combat, therefore, and was upon the point of being overpowered by these rustic barbarians, the bailiff of the doctor's villa, thrusting his red nightcap from the window, effected a cessation in the efforts of his ploughmen, and saved me from the disgrace of being vanquished by the cudgels and pitchforks in their unknighly hands. Quickly explaining to the farmer my reason for coming, and the dangerous situation of his master, after despatching a messenger for Dr.

Stirret, we procured a mattress and blankets, and returned as fast as we could to the scene of the unhappy duel.

We found matters there bad enough. The doctor was as severely wounded as he had at first proclaimed, and his agony was so great that it was with difficulty we succeeded in placing him on the mattress we had brought. Lord Hardenbrass was also apparently mortally hurt. The ball having gone through his stomach, his second feared that he would die on the ground. With some trouble we managed to carry my poor friend, in a faintly state, to the farm house. Lord Hardenbrass, however, refused to be conveyed anywhere but to the Hall. "I will perish," said he, "where I am, Major Belcour, or be conveyed to Marston Hall. Tell me not, sir," he continued, "about assistance sent for to this man's farm. If I am doomed to die by the hand of a village apothecary, methinks the disgrace of such a duel is quite infliction enough, without breathing my last breath under shelter of his roof. It was by your advice I consented to grant this person satisfaction, and behold the result."

"But, my dear lord," urged the major, "consider, it is merely till a conveyance can be sent for you; and, in order that your wound (which I trust is not so bad as you think,) may be looked to as speedily as possible, that I ask it."

"Major Belcour," returned the wounded noble, "I beg, sir, you will not further irritate me at this time. Favour me by either directing these men to convey me to Marston Hall, or send one of them off speedily, for a carriage from the village of Woodville. Cursed misfortune," he continued, "to be thus pinked by a crack-brained surgeon of a country town! I could die, major, with perfect satisfaction to myself, had I been cut down by the commonest trooper in the field; but to be thus brought low by an itinerant quacksalver! Oh, it's too ridiculous. It really almost makes me laugh to think of."

So saying, the noble lord fell back into the arms of his second in a violent fit of hysterical laughter, and fainted.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Oh, Romeo, Romeo, brave Mercutio's dead;
That gallant spirit hath aspir'd the clouds."

SHAKSPERE.

It happened, luckily, that a post-chaise, which Doctor Misauhin had arranged to have in the road that morning, in case of accident, and which he had ordered from the Shin of Beef and Gridiron (as if for the purpose of conveying him on a visit

of some distance to a patient), at this moment hove in sight, and I immediately informed Major Belcour of its approach. We therefore, with the assistance of two or three of the gaping and affrighted bumpkins around, carried Lord Hardenbrass across the meadow into the road, and placing him in it, he was supported in the arms of his second, and conveyed gently towards the Hall.

As for me I felt, as usual, the chief agitator and cause of this misery and bloodshed, and yet, as it were, quite independent of it all. My best friend, who had apparently sprung up in the last few hours, as adviser and guardian to my future ill-omened career, was hurt almost to death in my cause, and my foe was in as bad a condition. It was no piece of good fortune, I considered, that the bullet of my antagonist had been directed from my own heart into the body of another; as I conceived it a most unlucky chance which had hindered the missile from ending the career of one so apparently useless and unlucky. I, the exciting cause, and by whose actions these disasters had come about, forlorn and miserable, seemed to have no more to do with them now all had happened, than the horned beast which quietly chewed the cud in the meadow beside me.

As I was left alone in the field, I walked off to the farm, in order to see after my unfortunate friend, whose wound I dreaded to hear a report of. Farmer Blackthorne had ordered him to be placed upon his own bed; and Doctor Stirret arriving just as I reached the cottage, proceeded to examine his hurt. It was one of those curious perforations which sometimes happen in gunshot wounds. The ball had entered the right side, traversing round till it lodged upon the spine. The torture of such hurt is generally most excruciating, and the screams of the sufferer were so dreadful as to drive me, during the surgeon's examination, from the room. Alas! I cannot bear to dwell upon the remembrance of my poor friend's suffering in my cause; suffice it, that from the time of the duel up to the hour of his death, I never left him.

For nearly a week his sufferings were dreadful, and the cries he uttered, day and night, still ring in my ears. They pierced me then like daggers driven into my own flesh; and frequently in the dead of night methinks I hear them reproaching me, as it were, for being the cause of so good a man's suffering and death. At the end of five days a cessation of pain took place, and I consented to relinquish for a few hours, my post behind his pillow, thinking he was about to recover. Mortification, however, had taken place, and my poor friend died, when I imagined all my care was about to be rewarded with success. Both himself and his medical friend knew that the cessation of suffering was but a short prelude to the ending of mortality.

As soon as he began to feel himself somewhat easier, his spirit and good humour returned, and during the night he called me to him, and told me that all would soon be over.

"Thou art a good youth," said he. "In my career of science, I have been used to read men rapidly, and have seldom been deceived. I will yield to no man, not even to the great Gustavus, the Lion of the North, in penetrating into the dispositions of mankind, from a few hours' acquaintance. The hurry of the march,—the toil of the war,—the misery of the hospital,—'the imminent deadly breach,'—the sufferance under surgery;—all have taught me to know man well. You are a good youth, I repeat, and of a disposition too amiable to thrive in this world of rascality. Had I time, I would read you a sermon of advice; but I feel that I have not, and indeed it would be useless. 'O heaven! that one might read the book of fate.'

'How chances mock,
And changes fill the cup of alteration
With divers liquors! O, if this were seen,
The happiest youth—viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue—
Would shut the book, and sit him down and die.'

"In some sort I am prepared for death, and I die content, my dear young friend, that I have been able to preserve your life by my interference. You have relieved me too from a great weight, by saying that my antagonist is likely to recover. A little suffering will do that man good, and I am not sorry that I have chastised him a trifle. His intentions towards you, I saw, were improper; it was 'miching Mallecho,' as Hamlet says; 'it meant mischief.'"

I remained with him as long as he breathed; for the last few hours of his life he was motionless, and unable to speak. As his eye grew dim and glassy with the near approach of death, I saw it roll round the apartment and fix upon the water jug, so I arose and moistened his lips. He glanced at me to thank me, and then closing his eyes, soon afterwards ceased to breathe.

Besides myself, there was another individual who, half broken-hearted, watched the progress of the poor old gentleman's decease:—and that individual was his eccentric old gardener, Frederick Elliot. The calamity seemed to have completely unsettled his wits; and as soon as he heard of the dangerous state of his master, to whom, notwithstanding the warfare they had so long lived in, he bore the truest affection, he strode over to the farm-house, and walking into the kitchen, thrust himself into a chair between the dresser and a table

near the casement. Wedged in this place, he sat and listened to the agonized screams of his master, in a state of absolute torture. In fact, he suffered with him he heard suffer; but nothing could persuade him to go into the room where he was dying.

In this frame of mind the eccentric serving-man arrived every morning at daybreak at the farm, and rushed home to the village late at night. He spoke little to any one, but echoed his master's groans, and took scarcely anything by way of food but an occasional crust of bread washed down with large draughts of Farmer Blackthorne's strong ale; which the old dame, his wife, constantly supplied him with. When he ascertained that his master had breathed his last, he rose from his accustomed seat, seized upon the oaken clump with which he always walked abroad, and without a word to any one present, left the house and returned to his old employment of digging in his garden.

Lord Hardenbrass, meanwhile, contrary to expectation, I found was recovering from his severe and dangerous wound, and (although the bullet had passed through his body) was pronounced by Dr. Stirret for the present out of danger. This was so far satisfactory to me; but the death-bed scene I had witnessed, and my incessant attendance upon my poor friend, completely knocked me up, and I suddenly found myself seriously unwell. My nerves, indeed, had received a severe shock; and at the end of a couple of days I was in the height of a violent fever.

During the violence of my malady I was for some time delirious, and unconscious of what passed; but, with Dame Blackthorne's care, and Dr. Stirret's skill, I at length began to recover.

Much had in the meantime taken place, whilst I had been thus an inmate of Nonsuch farm. My delinquency in having misstated the occurrence of Sir Walter Villeroy's death, was divulged by my evil genius the scoundrel poacher, greatly to the astonishment of Lord Marston, the grief of Miss Villeroy, and the delight of my opponent and rival.

The Duchess of Hurricane exulted in her penetration, as she averred that from the first moment of looking upon my unhappy visage she had set it down in her own mind that I was good for nothing. There was something about me which, as Shallow says, she could "never away with," notwithstanding all my plausibility, hauteur, and (she was pleased to add) distinguished appearance.

The noble-hearted Lady de Clifford, however, as I afterwards learnt, remained fast my friend. She combated the opinions of all my enemies, Mrs. Allworthy told me, during a visit which I subsequently paid that old lady. Nay, she had even sent each day, during my illness, to make inquiry after my

health, setting at nought the offended dignity of her austere mamma.

"To me, madam," she said, "he has rendered a service, for which I can never be sufficiently grateful. So much, indeed, do I owe to his gallantry in defending me from the most horrible of deaths, that I shall never be able to repay the obligation. Besides," she continued, "I know you are all quite wrong in your feeling towards this young man. None but the ill disposed themselves can really be the enemies of Mr. Blount when they know him. In my opinion, his generosity and fine feeling, his honour and chivalrous disposition, quite counterbalance the violence of his temper, and his other faults."

The duchess was highly indignant at these sallies of her daughter, who she immediately began to suspect entertained feelings of partiality for one whom she defended so obstinately.

"Mrs. Allworthy must have been mad," she muttered, as she left the room in search of that lady, "to have permitted this intimacy to grow, and through which all these disasters have happened."

The duke, also, who was present at Marston during the illness of Lord Hardenbrass, decided, from all that had transpired, that I had neither truth nor honour; and the circumstance of my being, as he heard, disinherited, and expelled my father's roof, was quite enough for him. He desired his high-spirited daughter never again to mention my name in his presence.

Miss Villeroy, meanwhile, who had kept her chamber since this unlucky duel, and who had been persuaded by the duchess and her two guardians to look upon me with abhorrence and dislike, as the virtual murderer of her beloved father, now signified her desire to leave the neighbourhood immediately, and travel abroad. Amidst the classic remains, and under the bright and sunny skies of Italy, therefore, she was persuaded to forget the mishaps and misfortunes of Ratcliffe Blount.

CHAPTER XVII.

"—— As in the sweetest bud
The eating canker dwells, so eating love
Inhabits in the finest wits of all."

SHAKSPERE.

MISS ALLWORTHY I have not made much mention of since the unlucky serenade. From the circumstances attending that affair, the good old lady might with reason have entertained feelings of hostility towards me. The duchess, indeed, had expressed her displeasure to her in no measured terms for

having permitted the Lady de Clifford her daughter, and the heiress of Marston, to ride about the country in her absence, as she affirmed, more like the daughters of some homespun farmer than people of condition.

The poor old lady, who bore in her countenance the consequences of her error, if so it was, could ill brook the rebuke of her haughty relative; and telling the duchess that her ideas were unbecoming one of her high rank, took leave of the party; and, bidding Miss Villeroy beware how she broke the heart of a worthy man, for the sake or at the bidding of a hot-headed colonel of dragoons, ordered her carriage, and returned home.

Whilst I remained at Nonsuch farm, I received a letter from her, desiring to see me as soon as I found myself in travelling condition; and from her I learnt the matter I have just related. Dr. Stirret had also informed me, now that I was able to talk on matters of business, that my father and his party had set off for the continent about a fortnight after our disastrous field day. "To-morrow morning," said he, "I will talk further with, and give you some letters I have received here for you. This evening we have done as much as the state of your health will bear; meanwhile, I shall commend you to your repose."

Accordingly the next morning she delivered me a packet of letters, two of which had been brought for me from the Grange, two had come from Marston Hall, and one was an anonymous production. The two from the Grange were important. One bore upon its envelope those (to a beginner) formidable-looking printed characters, '*On His Majesty's Service.*' The other was from my father. The Horse Guard epistle named me as recommended to his Majesty for a cornetcy in the — Hussars: and the one from my father was an accompaniment thereto, ordering me to make my way up to London, to the house of a relative I had never seen, giving me likewise directions about my fit out, and orders to join at the expiration of the two months granted for preparation, without soliciting any more leave. The letter contained also a cheque for two hundred pounds, and signified his intention of being shortly in London. The letters from the Hall were, however, the first opened, as I knew the handwriting of both. The first was from Miss Villeroy, and contained this passage:

"Indeed, after all that has transpired, I could not leave England without either seeing or writing to you. Heaven knows that before I discovered the dreadful truth regarding my poor father's death I could have suffered all the odium and displeasure of my relatives, rather than have caused you the slightest unhappiness; but when to that discovery is added also the knowledge of your having professed to feel for my cousin the same sentiments of regard you so oft have sworn you felt towards me and me alone, how can I feel anything but

sorrow for your treachery, and contempt for all mankind? Believe me, I grieve for your situation, and know that this last unhappy business was not of your seeking. It was, however, the most unfortunate thing that could have happened. Much as I now feel dependent upon the advice and support of my relatives and guardian, I should have held fast to my promise to you; but as the case now stands, I feel myself absolved from all, and have never dared to acquaint them that there has been more than friendship between us.

"For ever, then, farewell; and may you be blessed in life, and far happier than I can ever hope to be!"

The one from Lady Constance ran something thus:—

"I do not suppose that under any circumstances I could be justified in thus writing. But the feeling I shall bear with me to other lands, from having done so, will be that of satisfaction. I go shortly with Miss Villeroy to Rome, at her request; though, she well knows, I have no great will to the journey. We may, perhaps, never meet again; but, think not I can forget how deeply I am indebted to you. The knowledge, too, that you have borne more than your proud spirit could brook for mine and Isabella's sake, merits both our thanks.

"Isabella has ever forbore to speak her sentiments, but I have discovered there has been more between you than I knew of, ere I went to Scotland, which I would you had not thus concealed. But I will not here further touch upon the subject. I shall now, I fear, never hear of you, as I used to do when you visited at the Hall during my absence; and now these unhappy events have happened, and we are to be so far away, I doubt not but that you will soon forget your sometime friends here. 'Twill be best so; and in the stirring events of man's career, it is, I hope, easy to do so. Not so with woman. —Farewell!"

It was evident to me, from these epistles, that the ladies had compared notes; and that the smart things I had felt it my duty to give utterance to whilst the companion of Constance, had been misconstrued by Miss Villeroy; which, together with my delinquency in regard to her father's death, my unhappy serenade, and disastrous duel, had made shipwreck of all my present hopes. I had set a barrier between her and myself, over which, at present, there was no approach.

The anonymous production, however, was the one which most puzzled me. It was in a female hand, and as it alluded to passages which had lately passed at my own home, and blamed my new relations for driving me from my father's roof, it must have been written by some person well acquainted with our family affairs; but as I knew no one who could possibly be much interested about my welfare, I ceased to trouble myself with conjectures, and gave it to the flames.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“—— He fishes, drinks, and wastes
The lamps of night in revel.”

SHAKSPERE.

A FEW days from the receipt of these letters I had bidden farewell to the few friends with whom I was on terms of intimacy, and was on my road by the York mail, towards the great metropolis. I felt an eager desire to be there; for a something whispered me, (one of those inexplicable feelings which sometimes visit us, as though with a certainty of correctness in the supposition,) that Miss Villeroy and her party were at that moment sojourning there. It was, indeed, not at all unlikely that London would be the first place at which they would make a halt before they set forth on their tour.

To me, London, with all its amusements, its vices, follies, and even its excellences, was quite an unknown world. With my usual self-sufficiency, I chose to disobey my sire's instructions, and, instead of proceeding to the mansion of my relative in Portman Square, located myself at the first house of entertainment I arrived at, which was in Holborn, at the inn where the mail stopped.

To those who have never seen this wonderful place, all is indeed full of interest, and I chose to take my own impression and view it by myself; trusting to chance in the direction I took, and the adventures I might meet with. It was pleasant, I thought, to a man in my circumstances to be totally unknown and unobserved in his peregrinations. Accordingly, after my rambles, it was my wont to thrust my feet into slippers, and seated in the little private room of this hostel, my window looking out upon the turmoil and bustle of the yard below, take my chop in as much contentment as the melancholy which at present pervaded my spirits, would allow of.

I allowed myself a week of this sort of quietude; and during that time saw all that a country cousin is usually shown of the sights of London. But it was especially my delight to search out and explore those parts of the town not so often cared for by strangers; and although there is now but little to remind us of the doings of the fierce Norman nobles, and the warlike kings of the immortal bard, yet still, it is something to haunt even the locality where Shakspere's scenes are laid. Accordingly I made a journey to Eastcheap, in the expectation of draining a cup at the Boar's Head, with as much devotion as if it was to have been actually tended me by the inimitable Francis himself. The Temple gardens, too, were full of interest,

and I chose to regard them as when that brawl commenced, "twixt wrangling Somerset and fierce Plantagenet."

The inns of court, too, where little John Doit of Staffordshire, black George Bare, Francis Pickbone, Will Squele, and other "swinge-bucklers" used to daff the world aside, not forgetting Grays Inn, where Master Robert Shallow fought with one Sampson Stockfish the fruiterer; and where, as he prophesied, "they talk of Mad Shallow yet." All these spots were hunted out, and viewed with peculiar delight.

It was after a day passed in thus wandering about the town, that on returning home to my inn somewhat late, I was accosted by a stranger, who, standing beside the entrance of the yard, was apparently enjoying the fresh air, and watching the arrival of the coaches, as he smoked his cigar.

I had observed this person once or twice before in my peregrinations; and it appeared to me that, like myself, he was a stranger in town, and occupied pretty much in the same pursuits. I had seen him looking with great interest, apparently, about the old buildings of the Temple; had crossed his path in several other parts of the town; and, by a singular chance, had met him in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, dogged his footsteps in Whitefriars, and nearly run against him once or twice in Hyde Park and St. James's Street. He was a genteel-looking man, apparently of the military profession. To his passing remark, as I entered the inn-yard, I felt myself obliged to make a civil reply, and we were soon engaged together in conversation. It was, I found, just as I had surmised. Although not entirely a stranger in London, he informed me that he was taking the advantage of a short leave of absence from his regiment, to view those places of interest, which, on former visits to the metropolis, he had not seen. As we were thus engaged in similar pursuits, and lodgers at the same inn, he proposed, after a short conversation, that we should take our chop together. I would willingly have been left to the indulgence of my own thoughts, but as he seemed a person of gentlemanly manners, I consented to his proposal, and we dined in my sitting room very cosily together.

He informed me during our meal that he was a captain in the Dragoon Guards; mentioned his name and regiment; that he had just come over from Ireland, where he had been lately stationed; and having visited his friends residing in Yorkshire, had run up to town on some urgent business, and intended to amuse himself for the remaining few days of his leave, by perusing the curiosities of London's famed city.

Of course I felt bound to throw off reserve in the company of one so candid; and, in return, let him know so much of my affairs, as that I was myself a candidate for military honours; had arrived in town for the first time in my life, and intended

to wait upon the Commander-in-chief, get myself fully accoutred, and then join my regiment. That I was named after my ancestors, and had resided hitherto in Yorkshire; adding thereto, that after I had rallied my spirits, and refreshed myself for a few days, I was due to some relations who resided in Portman Square.

The captain was extremely delighted when he heard my name and residence in Yorkshire.

"This is, indeed, fortunate!" he exclaimed, (starting up and seizing hold of my hand)—"my dear sir, you and I ought to be well acquainted, for our fathers were old friends before us; and my relations live only two miles from the village of Foxholes-upon-the-Wold. You surely must have heard your father speak of Colonel Catchflat of Ganton Dale."

I could not at the moment tax my memory with either the name or the residence my new friend mentioned: but as I knew that my sire had dropped most of his early acquaintance, I entertained no sort of doubt but that the son of one of his brother officers, when in the dragoons, was now before me. I felt, therefore, that I ought to be pleased with the circumstances which had thrown this polite gentleman in my way, and that every attention was due to him.

It is true that his manners appeared to me to be rather free and easy; but then, I considered, they became one of his profession; and being glad to meet a youth about to enter the army, he felt himself quite at home in his society. In short, I resolved to be delighted with everything about the Dragoon Guardsman, except his way of addressing his inferiors, and that I thought rather aggravated and unbecoming.

"How now, scoundrel!" said he, addressing the waiter, during our meal, "how dare you offer this gentleman, my friend here, Captain Blount, of Wharnccliffe Grange in Yorkshire, such d——d stuff as this Madeira? Pardon me, Captain Blount," he continued, addressing me, "for the liberty I am taking; but it makes me angry when I see these rascals trying to impose upon a gentleman on his first coming to town. Begone, sir," said he to the waiter, "and send your master here instantly with a bottle out of bin No. 4; and, d'ye hear? let us also have a couple of bottles of your very best champagne. D——, sir, if I catch you playing any of your London tricks upon this gentleman, I will cane you as long as I can wield my weapon. Again I beg ten thousand pardons, Captain Blount; but it makes me quite ill when I observe such attempts at imposition. You will allow me my way in managing these fellows whilst you stay here; will you not?"

"Oh, dear sir!" I exclaimed, "be under no sort of restraint on my account; cane the fellow to your heart's content, if you find the wine not to your liking, and we will have a sample

from every bin in the cellar, till we get at the knave landlord's oldest vintage."

"Ha! ha!" said the captain, "bravo, Captain Blount. Come, I love a lad of spirit. 'Fore Heaven, we'll have a rouse on't to-night."

I was indeed becoming not a little elated with the champagne, and the pleasure of finding a new friend of so agreeable a disposition; and after the melancholy which had lately pervaded me, the re-action was proportionably great. In short, I was soon whistled drunk, as the saying is, and proposed turning out about eleven o'clock for a regular spree in the streets of London.

The captain hailed the idea with delight, and sallying forth from our hotel, we held a consultation as to the direction we were to proceed in. I was for exploring the back slums in the east, but my companion preferring to visit the more fashionable end of the town; "westward, ho!" was the word, and we began our career.

The first move of my new friend, soon after starting, was to utter a continuation of the most horrible and terrific shrieks as we proceeded, which he informed me (on my supposing he was seized with a fit of epilepsy, and asking him in the name of Heaven what was the matter) was for the purpose of assembling the Charlies, and letting them know that he was out for the night.

This was rather a new idea, I considered: but supposing it customary, I forthwith joined in the cry, and gave the view halloo till the streets rang again. Accordingly, upon reaching that part of Holborn near Chancery Lane, we were regularly surrounded by gentlemen in woollen night-caps, and dreadnought coats, and ordered, in peremptory language, either to proceed with less uproar, or they should be compelled to take us under their own particular guidance.

"Ha! by St. George! by St. Anthony!" cried my companion, and striking down a watchman at each invocation, he fled like lightning down the street.

No sooner was this done, than a shower of blows fell upon me from the quarter staves of those around; and I found myself so cruelly mauled, that striking out right and left, I followed his example, and fled at my utmost speed.

Rattles now were sprung in all directions as I ran, and the hunt was fairly up. The whole town was the same to me. I knew no more about its localities than if I had been flying through the streets of Constantinople. I therefore held manfully on straightforward, overturning everything that came in my way. At first I thought it rather a diverting sort of pastime, and concluded that I should soon outstrip my pursuers. But to my astonishment, I found that the agreeable sound of

the instruments they carried in their fists ran rattling along the street before me, taken up by the watch, as each man heard the whirl of his neighbouring guard. Accordingly I was assailed and followed by an increasing posse, the faster I sped. One fellow, drawing himself beside the houses, dealt a furious blow at me with his bludgeon as I passed, another hurled his weapon at my shins, whilst a third dashed his fists and lanthorn in my jaws and face.

“On right, on left, above, below,
Sprung up at once the lurking foe.”

At length, in Cranbourne Alley (for that I have since discovered to be the name of such a thoroughfare) I was fairly hemmed in and surrounded. Determined not to be taken alive, I wrested the staff from the man nearest, and dealt my blows so successfully that I floored several of my opponents. Eventually, however, I must have been overcome, but for the approach of a party of gentlemen, headed by a young nobleman, and who hearing the sound of the encounter, thrust headlong into the fray, and opposing their naked fists against the oaken cudgels of the watchmen, beat them about their ears, and in a twinkling, disposed of a round dozen by laying them senseless on the pavement.

The throng, however, now swarmed so thickly upon us, that we fought like one of those regiments thrown into square at Waterloo, overwhelmed and almost hidden by the surrounding mass of assailants. “Hurrah for Ulster! and hurrah for Munster!” cried a great burly fellow, whirling his shelaleh round his head, and opposing himself to the leader of the gentlemen, who had rushed to my assistance. “Blood and ounds, but it’s the noble lord himself! by the powers, we’ve got him now!” The noble, or whatever else he might have been, and myself were indeed evidently the two persons they seemed most desirous of capturing, and he saw it. He had been several times struck by the bludgeons of the watchmen, with blows one might have thought would have been sufficient to fell an ox, but of which he seemed to heed no more than if they had been so much thistle-down.

Wherever he dealt his own straight-handed hits, over went a sapient-looking Dogberry, with either disfurnished jaws, or broken collar-bone. He absolutely chuckled with glee as he fought, and face and hands were covered with gore.

The continued spring of the rattles without, the *mêlée*, however, bringing more and more, even my ally saw that his efforts would soon be overpowered. Accordingly giving the signal to his followers for one bold charge, and cutting their way through the press, they dispersed in various directions, east, west, north, and south.

"Follow!" he said to me, as he darted straightforwards into the open square before us. Being closely pursued, we turned into a door, which stood most invitingly open, and overturning an immense fat old woman in the passage, we traversed over her body, and rushed most unceremoniously into the parlour. It was filled with blooming young Hebes, who, seated around the festive board, with brimming goblets before them, were apparently passing away the watches of the night with mirth and jollity.

They all appeared as much delighted with our appearance as we were to obtain a refuge amongst them, and raised a shriek of joy that would have awakened the seven sleepers. Throwing his purse upon the table, the young noble desired the old lady whom he had capsized, to fetch plenty of champagne, and order supper for the party immediately. Before, however, the old woman had time to leave the apartment, a hubbub at the door announced that the guardians of the night had tracked, were at our heels, and forcing an entrance. We were quickly in the passage to oppose them, and once more the row began. For some time, in the narrow entrance, we maintained an unequal fight, the young ladies before-mentioned escaping in rear of the premises. Then, and not till then, my gallant leader consented once more to make use of his discretion, and retire for advantage.

Again bidding me follow, he dashed up the staircase, four stairs at a bound, and rushing into one of the attics, threw up the window, and, agile as a cat, sprang upon the tiles. I felt the grasp of one of our pursuers as I darted after him; but succeeded in clambering over the parapet, and gaining the roof. We traversed the tops of several houses, till we came to a dark and dismal-looking row. My conductor, feeling his way as he proceeded, at length stopped, and grasped hold of a leaden water-spout, which he judged went down to the pavement beneath, and throwing his legs over the parapet, began to descend.

"Does that gutter reach to the bottom?" I said, looking over.

"I wish you could tell me that," he answered; "but, as I don't intend to remain upon the tiles all night, I mean to ascertain the fact."

If I had drunk less wine, and had a trifle more discretion, I should have hesitated to follow; but as it was, I thought myself bound in honour to accompany one who had so gallantly aided me.

Grasping, therefore, the square orifice of the pipe, I threw myself over the side of the parapet, and began to descend.

It was a painful and difficult task: and when about a quarter of the way down, I found my fellow-passenger had met with some obstruction, as my feet touched his hat.

"Hallo! there," said he, "what are you at? I can't get lower. This pipe runs in a slanting direction here; and though we can get down it well enough, we can't so easily get along it."

I looked down, and the sight made me sick.

"I shall fall," said I, "if you cling there much longer."

"Fall, be d——d!" answered the young noble; "scramble up again. We must get to the top of the house."

"What is that," said I, "between us and the area, which I can just distinguish below?"

"Why, I suppose it's a balcony," he answered: "but it's too far to drop."

Unfortunately, there was a watch-box in the street just below; and the watchman, who had been nodding very cozily there, was awakened by our dialogue. Holding up his lantern, he espied two black-looking objects, clinging like bottled spiders to the side of the house, the lowermost one kicking his legs and stretching them downwards in the vain hope of finding some buttress or coigne of vantage for his toes to rest upon. Without the smallest pity for our situation, he began to spring his odious rattle, and cry "thieves" as loud as he could bawl, running up and down the street like a bedlamite.

"Get up, get up," said my companion in misfortune: "we'll give that fellow the slip yet."

In vain I tried to scramble up the pipe. Not being able to get my arms round it, it was impossible to go on an inch. The young lord was enraged at the delay.

"Why don't you get up?" said he. "If I was there, I'd punch your stupid head for you. Get up, I say."

He tried to get up himself by clambering over me, and I found it as much as I could do to hold on with his additional weight.

Luckily I had obtained a footing upon a large staple, or we must both have fallen. Our situation was one of great peril. I felt the pipe beginning to loosen from its fastenings. It got worse and worse.

"We had better take our chance, and drop," said I, "for, if the pipe gives way, we shall be flung headlong upon the spikes below."

The watchmen had by this time collected two or three more of the fraternity, and seeing the peril of our situation, dispatched a man in search of a ladder.

"Ah! ah! you're nicely trapped now, my coveys," cried one of the party, "hold on, if you can, till the ladder comes."

"You and your ladder be d——d," said the young lord; "here goes for the balcony;" and down he dropped.

CHAPTER XIX.

"My mind misgives,
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels."

SHAKSPEARE.

No sooner was the lively nobleman on his legs, than he called out to me that all was right as a trivet, and desired me to follow his example. As I could hold on no longer, I slid a few feet further down, and letting go my grasp, should most likely have been killed upon the spot, but that luckily I alighted upon his lordship's shoulders, and broke my fall by nearly breaking his back. He was, however, quickly on his legs again, and, dashing in the window-shutters, was soon within the house.

Making his way out at the door of the apartment, he rushed down the stairs, felt his way to the street-door, and unfastening a ponderous chain, unlocked it, and bolted out.

Keeping close behind him, I was in the street almost as quickly as himself. Once more we dashed amongst the cudgels of the awaiting watchmen, and took to our heels.

A solitary coach was upon the stand at one end of the street, and my companion making a spring upon the box, I at the same moment pulled open the door, and leaped inside. The horses had been disfurnished of their headstalls, and were quietly ruminating probably upon their last flagellation, with their unhappy muzzles deep buried in their nose-bags. It was all the same to their present driver, however, who seizing the reins and whip from the footboard, amazed their hides with the bastinado he bestowed upon them.

"They can go if they like," he exclaimed, "and may I be d——d if they sha'n't go now!"

The skeleton steeds seemed fully impressed with the urgency of the occasion, and the old rumbling vehicle never, perhaps, in its best days, rattled along in faster style. The present waggoner, quite as headlong and wild as Phaeton, although without the aid of the ribbons, whipped them to the west.

It was lucky that at this time of night, or rather morning, there was not a vehicle in our way; consequently the principal danger arose from the perilous style in which we avoided the corners, and all but touched the various posts.

The bawling jarvey, who had popped out of the public-house near his stand, to behold the unwonted action of his pair of bloods, as they galloped past, was soon distanced.

Away we sped, swift as the pinions of the wind. The steeds

were not quite so despicable as are sometimes to be found chained to the splinter-bar of a hackney coach, there to be lashed whilst strength holds them up upon four battered and failing legs, and consequently they made a very respectable effort.

Dr. Johnson affirms there can be but few things in this world more exquisite than the delight of being whirled along in a post-chaise. He may possibly be right in his fancy, but I certainly began to dislike being whirled along at the pace we were going, in a hackney jarvey. Enough, I considered, had been done for the purpose of getting beyond the reach of the Charlies, as they were termed, and I began to meditate upon the propriety of making a flying leap from the door of the vehicle; and thrusting my head from the window, advertized Phaeton of my intent, unless he drew up.

Our career was, however, as suddenly terminated as it had commenced. The steeds, although from long use, they had as yet galloped up one street and down another, without compromising themselves, or dashing the coach either against the corner of a house or edge of a post, now from some miscalculation ran full upon one, and the pole of the carriage hitting the post as fairly as the well-directed lance of a knight in the lists, was shivered into a dozen fragments; both horses were thrown to the earth, and the coach itself was cooped head over heels. The driver, who had seen plainly the fate of his triumphant car, and had no means of guiding the maddened steeds from the destructive obstacle, giving them one more lash by way of a parting favour, leaped to the ground as the smash took place. Disregarding the kicking steeds, encumbered in their harness, pulled open the door, and helped to extricate me from my situation, half-stunned by the shock, and altogether in no pleasant plight.

The spot where this catastrophe took place was the corner of Charles-street, Grosvenor-square; and it so happened that there was a rout at one of those splendid mansions in the neighbourhood. When, therefore, his lordship, calling to me to bear a hand, had thrown himself upon the encumbered horses, and commenced unharnessing and assisting them up, as though he had not the slightest hand in their fall; half a dozen footmen, attendant upon some of the carriages in waiting, ran up and lent their assistance.

Whilst we thus worked at the fallen steeds, and eventually got them upon their legs again, the clattering steps of the discomfited coachman, together with the rushing sound of a posse attendant, proclaimed that our old enemies, the watch, were again at hand.

"Whose party is this?" inquired the young lord of one of the footmen.

Although I heard the question, I failed in catching the man's answer.

"Good," said the noble; "we'll go to it. Give coachee a guinea for his fare, and don't say which way we have mizzled." So saying, and throwing a handful of gold amongst the footmen, he seized me by the arm, and walked off to the rout. "We'll sup here to-night," said he. "It's just the thing. I am invited—I recollect; and I'll introduce you."

Being quite in cue for a continuation of the spree, I did not refuse so agreeable a refuge from the watch-house; only in my own mind I doubted the possibility of our appearing in our present somewhat disfigured state. My companion, however, soon put all to rights. He was apparently well known to the servants of the house.

"We've had an upset," said he, when he entered the hall. "Show us a room where we can adjust our dress."

Two or three liveried attendants immediately ran before us, showed us into a dressing-room, and brought us all the appliances to remove from our outward habiliments the signs of the fray. Our coats were taken off and brushed, hands and faces washed, and in a very few minutes we were presentable amongst the splendid assemblage above stairs. It was one of those brilliant parties given at the close of the season, amongst the cream of the aristocracy, and was rather a cram. All the remaining rank and fashion in town seemed present together.

The marquis and myself, therefore, walked in quite unheeded. As for myself, I was lost in admiration at the quantity of lovely women I saw around me; creatures so beautiful as to realize the Mussulman's ideas of the heaven he hoped to attain to. It was, indeed, to me a sort of paradise; and I gazed from one to the other with the greatest delight. There seemed so much ease in this society, that you might have thought, from the absence of restraint, and the delightful intimacy which appeared to reign throughout the assemblage, that the whole party must have been composed of one family. I felt that as my companion had thus brought me amongst his friends, he ought to introduce me to the lady of the house without delay. He however said there was time enough; and threading his way through the various rooms, nodding to one acquaintance, and stopping for a moment to speak to another, we made the tour of the suite of apartments which had been thrown open to the company.

"Ha! *Cœur de Lion*, it's a treat to see you," said a young titled guardsman. "Why, half-a-dozen of us have been making the tour of London for the last week to find your hiding-place."

"It's just as well for you, then," returned the other, "that you failed in the search, Georgie; for it's my pleasure to be

quit of you all. I'm sick of your idleness, and choose to be naught awhile."

"We heard you were in town," said the guardsman; "but none of us knew where you were to be found; no one had seen you; and you were, in short, incomprehensible, invisible, and inexplicable."

"I'll tell you what, Glansdale," said Cœur de Lion, "I'll be no longer guilty of this sin. I'm sick of fathering all your stale tricks, and begin to tire of my own. Dirty deeds are done by half the snobs about town, and my name is the stalking-horse. I shall cut the concern, altogether. But I'm surprised to see you here; I thought you were at Brussels. You were hit hard, I heard, on the Derby day."

"Egad, that's fact; I was rather hardly hit. Indeed, I may say, I *am* altogether floored. The governor's in an awful state. Three times he has come down, as you know, to pay off my debts. Now he has completely turned his back upon me. However, it can't be helped; I must take the consequence, I suppose. To-morrow I must send in my papers to the Horse Guards, and sell my commission; that will stop the gap for a while."

"Nonsense, man," said Cœur de Lion, "how much are you in for, altogether?"

Here the noble took the guardsman apart, and they conferred for a few minutes.

"Call on me to-morrow, at eleven," said he, "where I have told you. If you get there at that hour, you shall have it; d——n the commission, it's not worth selling. Keep it, I tell you."

Lord Cœur de Lion passed on, and I followed. Wherever he went, he was regarded with curiosity; and his name whispered from mouth to mouth. Every one bowed to him with respect: for although the town rang with his wild and daring pranks, few noblemen in Great Britain possessed a nobler and kinder heart. He was a young man of very superior talents, too; and as much above the set he headed, as greatest is from least. Whatever he undertook, he effected in gallant style; whenever he was imitated, the perpetrators were sure to make a mull of it.

Whilst Cœur de Lion was being recognised and accosted, I, being his companion, also came in for a share of notice occasionally. "Who's that tall, dark young man, with Cœur de Lion?" I heard once or twice asked, in a half whisper. One surmised that I was young Monteith, who had just been gazetted to the Life Guards. Another said, "It must be the Duke Gonzalo, who had just arrived from Naples;" whilst a young, coxcombical, and dandified beau ventured to suggest, that I looked more like a bonnet to a hell, whom Cœur de Lion had introduced by way of spree, than anything else.

"How did the filly behave, Cœur de Lion; I understand you won that steeple-chase by a neck," said the young Earl of Craveccœur.

"Yes, and I should have won it by a score of yards, besides; only, that she broke her back in the last leap," said his lordship. "She ran fifteen yards after she was done for: and pitched headforemost the remainder of the distance. That last wall was a puzzler; six feet and a wide ditch on the other side. She went at it like a thunderbolt, capsizing Harkaway Snob, who was riding Thornton's Mammoth, and going clean over them both in the jump."

"Who's that with you, Cœur de Lion? The ladies with me are most anxious to know," inquired an officer of the Life Guards: "they say he's either the Chevalier Bayard or Lord Herbert of Cherbury, stepped from the frame. We all thought Mac Jupiter of ours was the most splendid representation of the visage of one of the old Norman knights; but your friend beats him hollow. What a countenance!"

"It has been well punched, at all events, to-night," returned Cœur de Lion. "You'd better ask him who he is; for, hang me, if I can tell," he continued, turning back to look at me, for the first time.

Whilst this sort of desultory chat was taking place, I had come to a stand to observe an elderly gentleman, who, apart from the crowd, was listening to the lively prattle of a blooming Hebe of about seventeen; and apparently quite as much interested and careful in giving his answers to the trifling questions she asked, as if they had been put by the prime minister himself.

The tenour of the conversation arrested my steps, and I paused to contemplate the speakers. The iron-grey face of the cavalier was turned to the smiling eyes of the girl, as she played innocently with his eye-glass, and put her questions with as much *naïveté* as though she had been speaking to her own papa.

"Now, do tell me, dear Duke," said the lively girl, "how came you all to allow yourselves to be surprised in Brussels at that ball?"

"We were not surprised," answered the warrior.

"Not surprised?" she returned, "but I am; for we are led to believe, you all turned out to fight in your dancing-pumps. And now tell me another thing I wish to know: if you had been beaten at Waterloo, what would have become of you all?"

"We should have retreated to Brussels," returned the Duke.

"Ah! but could you have retreated to Brussels?" said the Hebe, archly. "I think you could not."

"I think we could," said the warrior, smiling.

"Well, you know best, certainly: but I doubt, you are mistaken. My papa and Lord Gustavus went over the field last summer; and they said you could not have retreated upon Brussels. And now tell me, since that point's settled, which of your achievements do you consider the most of, and like the best. And before you answer that question, tell me whether you like those new shells my papa has invented, and sent to Woolwich for the Artillery?"

"Well, then, to answer your last question first. I do not like those new-fashioned shells, as you call them, of your father's," said the warrior.

"And why not?"

"Because they would be of little use," he answered,—
"in service: you might as well throw plum-puddings amongst the men."

"Ha, ha! what a wonderful man you are," said the Hebe.

"With regard to the second question. I like the passage of the Douro better than anything we did in Spain."

"Why so?" said Hebe, getting more animated. "I do so like you, because you listen to my questions, and answer them so carefully. I love fighting; and I adore you, as every woman in England ought to do." (Here Hebe kissed the duke's hand.) "And now tell me, why you like the passage of the Douro better than all the rest."

The Hebe and the warrior passed on, and were soon hidden from me in the crowd; whilst I, admiring the goodness of disposition exhibited in the illustrious soldier (for such he appeared to be) which could patiently listen to, and kindly answer the prattle of the beautiful little romp who had fastened herself upon his arm, when noblemen and statesmen were seeking to catch his slightest nod, lost my introducer, and became also lost in the throng.

The wine I had drunk, and the whirl I had gone through, since I and the captain had left our flagons and our inn, had completely overcome my discretion, though the last action of the upset had considerably quieted me down. I was accordingly in an observing and monstrous sapient mood and very much inclined to take everything as a good joke, and be argumentative, provided I could have found a listener. However, with all my drunken wisdom, I could not quite reconcile myself to my present position. It was not to be approved of, I thought, and I resolved to seek my introducer; and after thanking him for his services rendered, to withdraw and find my way homewards.

Elbowing, therefore, a passage through the rooms, which "blazed with light," and brayed with minstrelsy, I came to a small boudoir, fitted up in the Eastern style; and hearing

voices within, I pushed aside the hangings, and entering found myself the next moment in the presence of and not a yard distant from, the Duchess of Hurricane. To paint the surprise, and describe the look of the awful duchess, it would be necessary to call to the reader's remembrance the occasional expression of the countenance of the immortal Siddons, when she chose to be Lady Macbeth.

My drunken wisdom immediately informed me that I had committed a breach of decorum; and the truth flashed across my brain that I had unknowingly intruded into the mansion, and thrust my disagreeable presence into the select party of her Grace of Hurricane.

The duchess stared upon me for some time, apparently as if awaiting the explanation or apology I was bound to make; and I, as if fascinated by her gaze, returned her look in solemn silence.

In the elegant boudoir where the lady of the mansion had thus retired from the heat and fatigue of her crowded rooms, were congregated a select few of her intimates, and the conversation before animated sank at once on my intrusion.

The duchess, either finding that I offered no word of apology or explanation, or perhaps seeing that I was a little flustered by flowing cups, with a haughty bow finished the scene by leaving the boudoir, followed by her party, who filed off with immense dignity of deportment, eyeing me as they left, as if I had been that strange animal described by Trinculo, half monster, half fish.

Had I not been "in case to jostle a constable," this meeting would have disconcerted me. As it was, I felt rather dashed, and resolved to leave the house immediately. One lady remained, and she was apparently so much surprised that she was unable to follow the duchess and her party. Before I left the boudoir I turned to look at her—it was Miss Villeroy.

Acting with my accustomed impetuosity, I forgot all but the delight of being thus once more thrown into her presence. The beautiful Miss Villeroy was before me, and alone: it was like offered mercy, and I threw myself at her feet. She attempted to rise, but I seized her hand and detained her.

"In the name of Heaven, Mr. Blount," she exclaimed, "what can have brought you to this house, after what has so recently happened?"

"Ask me not, dear Miss Villeroy," I exclaimed, "but since the gods have favoured me by thus inexplicably guiding me once more into your presence, hear me plead for a pardon for all those unhappy transactions that have driven me from your good thoughts,—deeds which have been thrust upon me by others, and by which I, the victim of circumstances, am rendered especially wretched, since they have procured me your

displeasure. As for those silk-coated slaves, I pass them ;—of you, and you alone, I ask pardon for all that has happened. Say but that you forgive me for what is passed, and I will leave you, if you wish it, for evermore.”

Miss Villeroy saw that I was at least as much excited by champagne as love on this occasion. She looked absolutely frightened.

“I do forgive you,” said she, resigning the hand I had seized which I covered with kisses : “but oh ! for the love of Heaven stay not here. God only knows what further mischief may arise from this unlucky intrusion of yours.”

Miss Villeroy rose from her seat, and withdrew her hand in some displeasure. “I must not remain here, Mr. Blount,” said she ; “permit me to join the duchess.”

I arose from my knee, though not without an effort ; my pride came to my aid. I felt I was hardly used by the young lady, and drew aside that she might quit the apartment. The entrance of the master of the house in some little haste, hindered her from leaving the boudoir.

“The duke, after glancing rapidly at me, addressed himself to his niece.

“Miss Villeroy,” said he, “as I presume this gentleman is here to-night by your invitation, I request the favour of your introducing me to him.”

“You will grant me your pardon, my lord,” said I, “since I conclude I am addressing the Duke of Hurricane, and allow me to set you right in this matter. However much I may have wished for the honour of an interview with Miss Villeroy, our meeting here is perfectly accidental, nor did your niece know, till a few minutes ago, that I was in the metropolis.

The duke was a descendant of the Plantagenets, and had all the dignity, chivalrous bearing, and noble look of one of that great line. He was a little fussy at times, but altogether he was a splendid specimen of his order. He was apparently a trifle out of sorts on this occasion, and his distended nostril and eye of fire gave him something the look of Charles Kemble when Falconbridge grows irritable at the presence of Austria before the gates of Angiers.

“I thought I understood the Duchess of Hurricane that I should find Mr. Blount, of Wharnclyffe Grange, in this apartment,” said he, turning to me, doubtfully.

“I am that unfortunate man,” I answered.

“Miss Villeroy,” said the duke (stepping aside to let her pass) “you will find your aunt waiting for you in the next room. Mr. Blount, perhaps you will favour me with a few minutes’ conversation in my study.”

“Farewell, Miss Villeroy,” I exclaimed, in some little pique

at her evident desire at an escape. "Whatever shall become of Michael Cassio, he's never anything but your poor servant. My lord, I am yours to the Antipodes."

The duke gave me a searching glance, and taking my arm, walked me off to his study.

"Mr. Blount," said he, as soon as he had closed the door, "your presence here somewhat surprises me. The Duchess of Hurricane supposes your appearance to-night is in consequence of Miss Villeroy's invitation. You tell me it is not so. To what circumstance, then, am I to understand we have the honour of your visit?"

"The circumstance, my Lord Duke, which has introduced me to you to-night, (for I conceive I am addressing the Duke of Hurricane,) is sufficiently droll. In fact, everything in this world seems droll, and very amusing. You will, I dare say, excuse my relating the circumstance that has procured *me* the honour of being introduced to your grace, if I split the difference, and tell you the person. The Lord Cœur de Lion was the person who brought me with him to your grace's party."

The duke saw immediately what was the matter. He rang the bell.

"Although," said he, "I should, in any other circumstances, have felt honoured by the introduction of a friend of Lord Cœur de Lion; yet, after what has so recently happened, I should have thought you would have hesitated to accept the offer of being introduced, when you found to whose party Cœur de Lion was invited. Seek for Lord Cœur de Lion," said he to the servant who entered. "His lordship and yourself dined together, perhaps."

"I never dined," I replied, "with Lord Cœur de Lion in my life, nor ever saw him till about an hour and a half ago. All I can say is, that I knew no more than the man in the moon where I was coming, nor can I tell you how I got here. That's all the explanation I can give. The cross examination begins to grow tedious, my lord; let us finish it. I feel sorry for the intrusion, and shall take my leave."

"Perhaps you will favour me by waiting till his lordship comes down," returned his grace. "I must know why he has placed us both in this somewhat disagreeable situation," saying this, he motioned me to take a chair. "I have heard much of you, Mr. Blount," he continued. "Though we have never met before, I regret it has been so, for I think much that has happened might have been avoided, had I seen you in time to have prevented the intimacy between my niece and yourself."

"I am greatly obliged to your grace for your candour, at any rate," I said.

"Or, indeed, known," continued the duke, without noticing the interruption, "that you were so constantly a visitor at

Marston Hall. I speak plainly, Mr. Blount, because I conceive it my duty so to do, and I must further tell you, since we have thus become acquainted, that as a guardian and relative of Miss Villeroy, I could never permit that young lady with my sanction to receive the attentions of one who bears a reputation for so much wildness and unsteadiness of conduct, and who, from his untractable disposition, is, I have been told, an exile from his father's roof, and alien from his affections."

"Good," said I, "have you any further trade with us? I begin to think this is vastly amusing."

"My Lord Cœur de Lion," continued the duke, as that nobleman entered the room, "I feel rather surprised that you did not consider at the time you invited Mr. Blount to accompany you to the Duchess of Hurricane's party to-night, that recent circumstances had occurred, which would render it anything but agreeable to that gentleman to be presented here. Mr. Blount knew not to whose house he was coming, he tells me; but as you are related to Lord Hardenbrass, now lying seriously ill at Marston Hall, you of course must have been aware of the unpleasantness of such meeting."

"You have already told me, Hurricane, more than I knew before, in telling me your friend's name," said Cœur de Lion, laughing. "There seems little introduction necessary on my part, but truth is, we were not so much to blame, for my introducing him was the thought of the moment. I do not think he knew to whose house he was coming. If there be offence in the matter, you must visit it upon me, Lord Hurricane; for I am alone in fault. Since we came together, we'll even depart together."

"You seem well met," said the duke, "at all events. May I beg the favour of knowing when and where you became acquainted with Mr. Blount, my lord?"

"Certainly," returned his lordship, "I can explain to your satisfaction in a few words the length and breadth of our intimacy. The first sight I ever had of our friend here, who seems mightily inclined to drop off to sleep in that easy chair of yours—"

"Enough said, gentlemen," said I, interrupting him, and half asleep, "unconsciously to have—"

"The first sight I ever had of our friend was in Cranbourne-alley, fighting with at least a dozen watchmen. His prowess interested me, and I rescued and brought him off."

"Unconsciously," I continued, endeavouring to argue the point.

"The first time I ever spoke to Mr. Blount," interrupted Cœur de Lion, "was on the gutter of Mother Midnight's establishment behind Leicester-square. That he was a gentle-

man, I felt convinced from his conduct; and being upset here at your door, I brought him to your grace's party."

"Unconsciously," said I, now half asleep, "to have offended."

"So," said the duke, "you took the liberty, then, of bringing a person seen and known for the first time?"

"Unconscious," said I, again endeavouring to have out my say, in spite of the drowsiness which had seized me.

"In the situation," continued the duke, "you have mentioned, and introduce him in the state you see he is in, at the duchess's party. Enough, sir, you shall hear further from me on this matter."

"Unconsciously (I at last managed to utter) to have offended the Duke and Duchess of Hurricane, gives me the greatest pain. But I beg to say, it has been quite unconsciously on mine and this gentleman's part. Nevertheless, if offence is taken, it can't be avoided, and the affair must proceed. My Lord Duke, I have the honour of wishing you good night, this is my address," so saying, and laying on the table Captain Catchflat's card in place of my own, I managed to rise, and Lord Cœur de Lion, making a haughty bow to the duke, we walked out together.

CHAPTER XX.

"He a captain! Hang him, rogue! He lives upon mouldy stew'd prunes and dried cakes."

SHAKSPERE.

TOTALLY unused to wine, I had, like Cassio, but poor and unhappy brains for drinking, and already experienced the different stages of drunkenness described by Olivia's clown, first fool, then madman, and was now about nearing the third stage, my wits being nearly drowned, or at least becoming stupified; all which stages had supervened from the first dose or bout. However, being strong in constitution, I wrestled with the inordinate fiend, and followed my companion resolutely.

"That Hurricane is an ass," said Cœur de Lion, when we reached the street: "he's always fancying that his dignity is in danger. It's just as well that he is to call me out for this night's fun, for I had always rather be called than call."

"If anybody's dignity has been hurt, I think mine's the most damaged," said I, "and if anybody's to be called out, it strikes me I ought to be the appellant."

"We'll think about that hereafter," he returned.

"May I beg the favour of knowing where we are progressing towards," I asked, "for the long and interminable row of

lamps before us seems to lead in an avenue of dancing stars, to the extreme end of the world. I protest I see no termination to them."

"This," said Cœur de Lion, "is Brook-street, and my destination is nearly as far as the last lamp you can spy. I recommend you to get a bed at the same hotel, unless you have made up your mind to sleep in the streets."

"I do, indeed, feel rather uncomfortable and extremely sick, Lord Cœur de Lion," said I, "and the very stones in this lonely street, (as Rob Roy says,) seem to rise up to apprehend me; they appear to have a strange inclination to hit me upon the nose every step I take."

"Ah! ah!" said Cœur de Lion, "that's because you can no more smoke, than you can drink. It's the cigar, man, which I gave you just now, that makes you so giddy. You must learn to smoke in order to meet the tastes of the hussars; a dragoon without a pipe in his mouth, is as incomplete as without his spurs. Now I think on't, we'll turn in at Madame de Galloni's in Regent-street, and see what's going on there. I'll introduce you to Madame de Galloni, the finest woman in town."

"Another introduction, and more fine women, eh?" I said. "Well I'm on the wide world now, that's a fact. May I beg the favour of knowing who your friend Madame de Galloni is, for I had rather not experience a second edition of her Grace of Hurricane."

"Madame de Galloni is a French lady, not long arrived from Paris," answered his lordship: "she is always glad to see her friends at her little *soirées*, and she will be only too happy to welcome us to-night. But mind one thing, you are not to play there; I wont introduce you unless you promise me not to play. It's a clear case, you're exceedingly green, and ought to have brought your grandmother up to town to take care of you."

"*Vous avez raison*," said I, "it's a lamentable truth. I'm extremely obliged to your lordship for supplying the old lady's place. I do, indeed, feel extremely helpless just now; that cigar hath proved mine enemy, indeed."

"Here we are at Madame's," said Cœur de Lion, stopping and knocking at a door in Regent-street, which after some little delay, and more than one person peeping at us with the chain up, was at length opened, and we entered and walked up stairs.

Madame de Galloni's apartments were brilliantly illuminated, and filled with company. Several very handsome French women were present, and a decent accompaniment of heroes from the *grand nation*, cavaliers whose visages were garnished with hair enough to stuff all the chair cushions in the apartments, and whose diamond studs and breast pins, gleamed

and glittered upon the sombre ground of the dirty shirts in which they were stuck. The remainder of the company was made up of London *roués* and metropolitan flats.

Several tables were occupied by players, at several sorts of games, and one large table, at which the less determined gamblers were congregated more for the purpose of flirting with the handsome French women than for the sake of the game, was presided over by the lady of the house. She clutched avariciously in one hand a large-sized money box, with a small opening at the top, into which she received a stipulated *douceur* from whoever won the pool at the round game at which they were engaged.

She arose the moment she saw us enter the room, and rushed up to us with great affectation of delight: "Ah," said she, "mon brave! I am so glad you come again. You was so droll last time you come, dat we have been quite *misérable* ever since; dis is de first *soirée* I have been able for. You was so funny, dat we all get into watch-box, and taken before de police in de morning."

Cœur de Lion had been bullied, I afterwards found, by the Frenchmen, and some of his friends cheated, upon which he had soundly thrashed some half-a-dozen, and kicked the rest into the street, the hubbub attending which had caused the whole party to be carried off to the watch-house; himself alone escaping, by upsetting every one who came in his way.

"You play, mon cher?" continued Madame, bending her head capriciously on one side. "Ah no, you nevere play. Your handsome friend play, I dare say. Come, sare, an join. —My lord—you not to forget de box, de box keep de house, and I keep de box."

My companion thus solicited, dropped his gold into the box, and I followed his example, to the no small delight of the hostess; and we sat down to observe the progress of the game.

Madame de Galloni was a splendid specimen of French beauty; she was tall, and rather of the stoutest, but her form was magnificent, her complexion was dark, and her hair like the raven's wing. Her eye was as brilliant as the diamond, and her features beautifully formed; but when you looked upon her, you could see she would as easily murder with a stiletto while she smiled, as with her beautiful eyes. One minute she looked like an angel, (that was when the winner deposited his coin in her tin box,) the next she scowled like a fiend, that was when any one forgot, or endeavoured to shun the offering.

"Ah, captain!" shrieked the handsome Galloni; "why you not put in my box dat time. Shame, sare, to deceive me."

"Voilà," said the captain, dropping in the coin.

"Yes, voilà, it is," returned the Frenchwoman. "You

please to say *voilà* every time you win, sare, aloud, mind, or you shall not play more. You cheat me once, twice, three times, if I had not look sharp after you."

"Madame," said the captain, "have a care; I don't like those observations."

"No," returned the Galloni; "you like not observation too much ven you vin, as you alwaise do, and cheat my box, as you alwaise try."

"I'll play no more at your table," said the offended militaire, rising. "*Voilà*, here's for your d—d charity box."

"You must speak by the card, captain: equivocation will undo you here," said Cœur de Lion.

"Who made that observation?" said the captain, turning fiercely round, and rushing up to him.

The captain was extremely short-sighted, and he rammed his face close into that of the noble, who sat with the utmost coolness, and smiled upon his fiery visage.

No sooner did he catch a fair glimpse of the countenance of Cœur de Lion, than his ferocious look changed into something like consternation and dismay, and he drew back, as though he had seen a basilisk.

"Oh, my lord," said he, "I beg ten thousand pardons. I did not know it was you who spoke. I trust I see you well;" and he drew off.

In progressing to one of the other tables, he passed and recognised me.

"Ah! Mr. Blount," he exclaimed, seizing my hand, "I am delighted to see you again."

It was my friend, Captain Catchflat, from the Wolds.

"Do you know that fellow?" said Cœur de Lion, carelessly.

"Is he a friend of yours?"

"Yes," I said; "we are staying in the same hotel together. He comes from near the same part of the world I myself come from."

"Oh," he returned, significantly, "does he?" and he walked away to another part of the room.

The captain, meanwhile, had a thousand apologies to make for having outrun me in the beginning of the evening's amusements. He proposed teaching me how to play at *rouge et noir*; and forgetting the injunctions of the generous Cœur de Lion, in the course of an hour I was a considerable gainer, and quite in love with the game.

My introducer fought rather shy of me, after he discovered my acquaintanceship with the captain. Once during the night he addressed me, advising me to cut the concern, and sheer off to bed; after which I saw him no more.

Meanwhile, the captain kindly taught me several other games of chance; and at daybreak we took leave of the radiant

Frenchwoman and nymphs, and made our way towards our hotel, I having lost every coin I had in my purse, over and above what I had won, and standing indebted to Catchflat a trifling sixty pounds.

The captain was now in higher glee than ever, and vowed he would look in at the Finish, and get a cup of coffee before we returned to our inn. We accordingly made our way to a place situated somewhere near Covent Garden, where, seated upon benches in a filthy room, amongst some scores of paviours, Irish bricklayers, and carters, we refreshed ourselves with coffee and roasted potatoes. Here the captain, who seemed always anxious for the beginning of a fray, managed to offend an Irish hod-bearer; and, after having volunteered not only to fight him with one hand tied behind him, but to thrash him within an inch of his life in ten minutes, received, with the greatest humility and meekness of disposition, sundry cuffs from his opponent in the face, and more than one kick behind; whilst I myself managed to come in for several ugly blows, in the endeavour at restraining Pat's ire; so that, at last, I became the principal in the fight, and was obliged to take the captain's challenge upon myself, and engage with a hod-man in a stand-up fight. A shindy amongst a posse of Emerald Islanders is a mighty catching affair, and I had quickly half-a-dozen hammering at me at once. The row spread like wildfire, and the Finish was in a state of disorganization. The market-men who were English fought on my side, and the Paddies whacked away for the hod-man. The room became too small for the conflict, and the riot extended into the street. Rattles were sprung by dozens, and no man regarded them, till at last the captain, myself, and some half-a-dozen of the lowest ruffians from Calmel-buildings, and St. Giles's, were captured, and conveyed to the watch-house. Here we were quotted down, and thrust in a sort of cellar, amongst other worthies who had disturbed the peace of the metropolis.

The place was filthy and wet, and at first so dark, that, as Falstaff says, you could not see your hand. However, those who had been in durance before us had become more accustomed to the gloom, and seeing the captain and myself in the garb of gentlemen, they amused themselves by throwing all the filth they could find over to our end of the prison.

The gallant Captain Catchflat seemed as though he had served an apprenticeship to this sort of treatment. He gathered himself together in one corner of the dungeon, like Dalgetty in the cell of the Duke of Argyle at Inverary; and to my indignant complaint of such an outrage upon the sacred persons of gentlemen of his and my own dignity, he replied in the words of the vision in the cave of Montesinos, "Patience, and shuffle the cards."

"Patience, my dear sir, and a trifle of endurance, you will find the best recipe here. Gentlemen," said he to the crew of pickpockets and ruffians, who were amusing themselves at our discomfort, and giving us a foretaste of the pillory, "gentlemen, if you are gentlemen, behave yourselves like gentlemen, and give us as little of this ungentle usage as you like. We've no objection to stand tip if you'll allow us to sleep comfortably till we're had up."

I have passed many a night since that day in the open world, and exposed to the elements; but I never felt so chilled and uncomfortable as I did in this London watch-house. Ere long, however, we were had up, fined and reprimanded for our behaviour, and reached our inn, dirty, draggled, uncomfortable, and ill, as if we had been ducked in half-a-dozen horse-ponds. The captain recommended a hot bath, and retired to bed, to try and sleep off the fatigue of the night's amusement.

To sleep, however, I found impossible; and I lay and pondered over the ill-luck that had dogged my footsteps, and led me to expose myself, in such a situation, before the Duke and Duchess of Hurricane and Miss Villeroy. I saw that all was now over in that quarter. I had disgusted Miss Villeroy, and confirmed the ill opinion which both the duke and duchess had entertained of me; and all without the least fault that I could perceive on my own part.

Now that I had become sobered, I recollected everything which had happened. I had degraded myself in the eyes of the whole room; and there appeared no explanation or excuse that I could offer. "Alas!" I said,

"It will help me nothing,
To plead mine innocence; for that die is on me,
Which makes my whitest part black."

I had, however, one consolation. The Lady Constance de Clifford had not seen me. Apparently, she was absent from home, and had been spared the shock of witnessing the entrance, as an intruder in her mother's party, of one whom she had honoured with her friendship, but who was regarded by them as a half-drunken blackguard, whom it was great forbearance not to kick into the street.

The noble, generous, and true-hearted Constance, I felt convinced, would never believe ill of me. I called to mind every look and expression of her beautiful countenance; all the hours we had spent since we had first become acquainted; the delightful scenes in which we had lingered, and walked, and ridden amongst, returned to my remembrance; and suddenly I found myself more in love with Lady Constance de Clifford than ever I had been with her beautiful cousin. Nay, I had

wondered where my eyes, ears and senses could have been ever to have so preferred the one to the other :

“Not Hermia, I said, but Helena I love :
Who would not change a raven for a dove ?”

Now would I have given a thousand ducats for but half an hour of one of those opportunities I had so often neglected. With my accustomed impetuosity, I resolved to begin by times ; and jumping out of bed, and seeking my writing materials, seated myself at the little dressing-table, and addressed her in the following stanzas :—

“The lonely heart divided far,
From all it lived but to adore,
Is dark as night, whose brightest star
Is seen no more.

“Alas ! that hopes should only spring
Within my soul, to be o'erthrown ;
Like budding flowers, ere blossoming,
All withered, strewn.

“Thy perfect form, within my breast,
Have I long hoarded up in vain,
And never can my heart be blest
By thee again.

“Not so, not so ; the hour of need
Thy noble heart will not forsake ;
Thy own sweet breast the bruised reed
Will never break !

“Then come ! But yet I fear to see
My fancied joys all melt away,
And faded, as I gaze on thee,
Hope's dying ray.

“To gather from thy glance the woe,
I should expect—but yet will not,
To see thy smile of scorn, and know
I am forgot !

“And wilt thou dash the hopes away,
That to thy love still eager cling,
As birds that watch the earliest ray
Of sunny spring ?

“And will thy heart, so truly loved,
The dearest prayers of mine repel
To gentle pity steeled—unmoved—
Love's yearnings quell ?

“When all around with gladness own,
The rapture of thy loveliness,
My heart will still—its hopes o'erthrown—
Thy form caress.

"Were endless night my future lot,
Should morn but wake to misery,
Till mind was gone—or life was ~~not~~—
I'd think on thee!

"Again, then, let me see thy face,
Thy lip, where smiles should ever play,
If there no thought of me I trace,
I'd turn away.

"The brightest dream that cheered my rest,
The sweetest voice that whispered peace,
The loveliest form that filled my breast,
Will ever cease.

Having finished the above effusion, I felt as if I had in some sort made reparation for my former blindness: and paved the way also, perhaps, to reparation of the ills of the last few hours. Could I but see Constance, I imagined it would not be hard to restore myself to her good graces. The clock of one of the neighbouring churches was striking six, as I folded up and directed my verse. It was too early to send them; so tumbling into bed, I soon fell asleep.

It was late in the day ere I was awoke by my excellent friend, Catchflat, who, knocking at my door, announced that he had ordered our dinner at home, as he conceived I should not feel much inclined to turn out early.

"But, my dear fellow!" he exclaimed, drawing up the blinds of the window, which admitted but a dubious sort of light into the room, from the Chaucer-like balcony which hung over the inn-yard; "why, I had no idea that you had been so punished about the nob in last night's spree. Your peepers are in mourning; have you looked at yourself in the glass this morning?"

"The devil!" I said; "you don't mean to say my eyes are blackened. I do, in truth, feel rather sore about the face and head, and my nose hath a sensation as though a hot iron had been thrust up it, and each nostril stuffed with cayenne pepper. Pray ring the bell, my good sir, and order me hot water. I will inspect the state of my countenance forthwith, and join you below as soon as I am dressed."

When the captain left the room, I jumped out of bed, and seizing the looking-glass, beheld my visage nearly as much dilapidated and in as rueful a state as the knight of La Mancha's must have appeared after his carcase had been travelled over and his jaws demolished by the drubbing of the lover of the gentle Maritornes. There was a black circle entirely round each eye, my nose was swollen into a perfect proboscis, and portions of the skin struck off my cheeks.

The boots of the inn, a little quiver fellow, with an infantine

voice, and a figure like what one might have imagined was the identical form of the inimitable Francis of Eastcheap, grinned like a little ogre when he entered and beheld me.

"Oh, my eyes! what a guy," said he. "You'll excuse me, sir, but you do look sich a rum un. My vigs! ar'n't 'em been a pitching into you, neither. You'll excuse me, sir; but there's a been a more than one a hitting at you when you catched that hiding. I wish I'd a been somewhere near when it happened."

"I wish you had, my little man," said I, dolefully; "or any one else with spirit enough to have helped me out of that affair. I shall not be fit to be seen for a month."

"You've give 'em as good as they brought, however," said he; "look at your poor fists else, all knock'd to bits."

Here the little boots put himself into scientific attitude, and began to dodge about the room, like a sprite, now parrying one blow, and anon beating off another, springing back and darting forwards, apparently for the purpose of obtaining an advantageous plant in his imaginary adversary's knowledge-box, with so much alacrity, that I began to have a very elevated opinion of his prowess. But when at last he delivered his straight-handed blows, he became so totally infuriated, that he darted all over the room, like a perfect bedlamite.

"Ah, I wish I had been beside you, sir," he said, stopping to take breath; "I'd have smash'd 'em up. I consider myself one of the fancy, sir; and if I'd a been in the way when you came home last night, I'd a clapped a raw beef-steak upon your precious face. Now, it's too late. You can't wash a blackamore white, arter he's once been properly walloped, and slept upon it. The only thing you can do now, is to send for the 'poticary, and clap half a dozen leeches on each eye, and as many more upon your nose. I lived with Tom Crib once, sir, and many a time I've doctored his nob for him. I'd have pitch'd into 'em."

During this display of the little fellow's prowess, and whilst I forgot my own rueful plight in laughter and admiration at his eccentricity, a shrill voice called to him from the balcony, which seemed to strike him all of a heap, and he sneaked out of the room, more like a dog with a bottle at his tail, than the hero I had begun to consider him.

The voice which so paralysed his gallant bearing was that of his wife, the athletic chambermaid of the hotel, and the thundering bastinado she bestowed upon his carcase, gave me an opportunity of judging in how far his scientific and curious parries, learned whilst with the champion, had been of service. It seemed, however, that the advice regarding the application of beef-steaks applied in time, were as necessary for him as myself, for I much feared, from what I witnessed in the balcony before my window, that the poor little man would be likely to exhibit as disgraceful an appearance as I myself did. After

pommeling him till she was out of breath, the Amazon consented to tell him what the infliction was for.

"You little rascal!" said she; "you poor, beggarly fellow! how dare you stay out all night, and leave me to do your dirty work. Go," she continued, "you apology for a boots, and do your work! you miserable specimen of a porter, or I'll break every bone in your diminutive body, I will!"

In short, I was obliged to interfere, and procure him a pardon; and in return, he promised to deliver the enclosure, containing my verses, some time that evening with his own hand.

It was not a little annoying to me to be rendered thus unfit for decent society, by my adventures at the Finish; for during the time I had lain tossing on my pillow, I had revolved things over in my mind, and determined forthwith to shift my quarters from this part of the town. My father might soon now arrive, and I thought I had better, therefore, call and introduce myself to my relatives in Portman-square. My new friend, too, I had reason to hold in slight regard, as to his personal courage, for had he behaved with proper spirit in the society to which he had introduced me, I should not have been obliged to take up the cudgels in his defence.

The captain, I saw, was a coward and a bully. To me he had behaved most unhandsomely; and yet, so meekly did he beg my pardon, that, for the life of me, I couldn't find it in my heart to kick him. He offered me many little civilities too whilst confined to the house, volunteered to call upon several tradesmen at the west end of the town, and giving orders for my outfit, took upon himself the task of arranging what articles were necessary for a cavalry officer on first joining his regiment. He also purchased me a pair of green goggles to hide the unsightly circles which adorned my eyes, and, by way of amusing the dull age of a whole week, during which I remained unfit to be seen, he once more undertook to give me a lesson with the dice-box, in the joyous hope I might revenge myself for what he had won from me at Madame de Galloni's rooms. In fact, I felt myself under considerable obligations to the gallant captain for his many civilities, and his great attention during this time; and, as we frequently strolled out after dark, he introduced me into several small gambling houses, where we were so fortunate as to make the acquaintance of other gentlemen, his friends, of disposition similar to his own.

In short, before many days were passed in this worshipful society, I acquired such a fondness for hazard, blind-hooky and billiards, that I was never happy but when either dice, cards, or cue was in my grasp. We began with the pasteboard after breakfast, knocked the balls about till nightfall, and rattled the bones till dawn; till, in short, I lost every sixpence I brought with me to town. After that, I staked every article of baggage I possessed; and at last, stood deeply indebted to Catchflat besides.

It was on the morning after I had been thus cleaned out, that, on coming down to breakfast, I found my friend had left town for a day or two. He was gone, the little waiter told me, to pay a visit to a nobleman residing about ten miles out of town. Finding, therefore, my face pretty well restored to its wonted comeliness, I hid the still remaining dark circles, which had now taken the various hues of the rainbow, under cover of the capacious green goggles the captain had provided me with, and sallied out to take a walk in the west end of the town.

Just at this time, it was a great treat to me to wander about, and observe the various places of amusement offered by merely passing through its streets. On this day, I amused myself by sauntering about the west end; and towards evening, finding a few stray coins in my pocket, turned into Joy's Coffee House in Covent Garden, and ordered dinner. Tired with my walk, I threw myself into a chair in the coffee-room. Two youths were sitting over their wine, discussing the police reports in an old newspaper, at the table next me.

"How often that fellow has been had up," said one; "I wonder this last affair didn't get him a turn at the tread-mill." "Who is the fellow, his companion?" inquired the other. "I've seen him a good deal about lately, and have observed Catchflat pigeon him nicely once or twice in the hall in Jermyn-street. I thought he was a leg at first; but I suspect now that he's a green-horn, Catchflat has got hold of somewhere in one of his country trips." Just at this moment the speaker caught sight of me at the table near him; and turning his back in some little confusion, signed to his companion, and the conversation dropped.

I instantly rose from my seat, and begged the loan of the paper. In the police report I found the following:—

"Marlborough-street. On Saturday, two persons, calling themselves gentlemen, were charged with creating a most disgraceful riot in Covent Garden, early in the morning. It appeared they had been drinking with the low ruffians who are just now employed in paving New-street, close at hand; and having reduced themselves to a state of madness, they became so outrageous, that even the blackguards assembled thrust them out of their society. Upon which, they rushed into Covent Garden, knocking down every person who came in their way, till they were ultimately secured, and lodged in Mary-le-bone watch-house. One of these worthies has been frequently before at the police-office, and is well known. His name is Catchflat. He once, we believe, held a commission in the army, but was turned out of the service for mal-practices; since which he has narrowly escaped hanging for forgery—a regular *chevalier d'industrie*. The other gentleman gave the name of Blount; and is, we dare say, a horse of the same colour—*arcades ambo, id est*, blackguards both. They

were fined and discharged, after being properly reprimanded."

This paragraph completely spoiled my appetite. I saw that I had been gulled by this "common robber," who had, as Falstaff has it, "made a younker of me." I had taken mine ease in mine inn to some purpose; and whilst I was so absorbed in the new accomplishment this Catchflat was teaching me, I had not even found time to look into the daily papers. Swallowing my meal as fast as I could gulp it down, I determined to go home, and came the captain within an inch of his life. Before I had finished it, however, another paragraph, in the *Morning Post* of that day, and which the waiter handed to me, completely drove the former one, and the miserable scoundrel, Catchflat, for the moment from my remembrance. It was headed, "The Recent Duel," and ran thus:—

"We are grieved to hear, that the Duke of Hurricane still continues in the most precarious state; and his medical attendants fear there is not the slightest chance of recovery. A second attempt was made yesterday by Mr. Guthrie, to extract the ball (which has lodged somewhere near the heart) without success. The duke has borne both operations with the most heroic fortitude; and it is believed a third attempt will be made by Mr. Guthrie next week. The quarrel between his grace and Lord Cœur de Lion, we are informed, was in consequence of some difference, which is said to have arisen at the Duchess's rout on the 16th instant; and in which it is also said a third person, whose name we have not been able to learn, was the offending party, Lord Cœur de Lion taking the quarrel upon himself, and refusing any explanation till after the meeting had taken place."

So then a duel had been fought, and the life of a great and good man—a man of high rank, and an ornament to his order—was likely to be sacrificed, owing to my having unfortunately made my appearance at his house with my Lord Cœur de Lion. It really appeared to me that I was not only unlucky myself, but the cause of ill luck in others. I was like the sea-fowl, whose coming is the forerunner of danger and tempest. My infernal verses, too, had perhaps arrived pretty much about the time Lady Constance de Clifford most probably beheld the bleeding body of her beloved father brought into the house—murdered, she might well think, by my means.

At the moment I lost all spirit, and began to despair. Rallying, however, after some time, I determined to sally forth, and soundly thrash my new friend, Captain Catchflat.

"There will, at least, be some sort of satisfaction in that," said I. "How dare the dastardly swindler introduce himself to a gentleman, and after getting him into all sorts of scrapes, cheat him out of his money and his respectability?"

Most youngsters are incensed at finding themselves the dupes of a designing knave; and after the dejection consequent upon

reading the last paragraph, my choler arose when I reflected on the first. Like Paul Pry, I vowed never to be good-natured again. "D—n the fellow," I said, "I would not have suffered his vulgarity for another week, for the sea's worth." To be mixed up with such a scoundrel in the public papers, was a scrape indeed. "Captain, thou abominable cheater!" I exclaimed, rising, and seizing my hat; "art thou not ashamed to be called captain? If captains were of my mind, they would truncheon you out, for taking their names upon you, before you have earned them."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the waiter, presenting his bill, "I beg your pardon, sir, but it's customary to pay for what you call for in this hotel, especially as we have never had the pleasure of seeing you except on the night you supped here with Captain Catchflat; you will find both the accounts there, sir."

Let it suffice, then, to mention that, on reaching my inn, I found to my dismay that this worthy officer had absented himself without leave or beat of drum, carrying with him not only all those sums he had so frequently won of me, but actually every article of any value I had in my portmanteaus, and whatever he could lay his hands on of the various articles which had been completed and sent home, leaving me moreover to pay for all the breakfasts, dinners, and suppers he had partaken of, and so generously treated me to, whilst we had been *bons camarades*. But worse than this, than these, than all, was the discovery which I soon afterwards made, that from his having so frequently attended me to the shops of the tradesmen I was having my different articles of clothing from, he had made use of my recommendation, and procured large quantities of goods for himself. In fact, he had done the thing well, and I looked the idiot I felt myself.

A ponderous portmanteau, which he had brought with him to the hotel, was all that remained for me to take possession of in return: and as he had taken *out* the pickings of the kit, I declined having anything to do with that.

The Bardolph-faced landlord of the hotel naturally held me in some sort of suspicion; and I found myself compelled immediately to despatch a letter by little friend, boots, to my relation in Portman-square, in order to be extricated from the difficulties by which I was now surrounded.

Nothing, indeed, would satisfy mine host, till his bill was paid. He said, "he was one of those obdurate citizens, whose hearts are hardened to any sound but the chink of sovereigns," possessing no more mercy or consideration than an unbribed sheriff's-officer. "He doubted," he said, "nothing of my respectability, but that wouldn't serve his turn. He must have his bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill. The Captain," he hinted, "could never have managed matters as he had done, without my assistance." At length, growing irate

at his impertinence, I turned him out of the room, and threatened to kick him down stairs.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had liv'd a blessed time; for from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality;
Renown and grace is dead."

"Most sacrilegious murder."

SHAKSPEARE.

FROM the unpleasant dilemma which I have recorded in the foregoing chapter, I was, however, after a few hours, relieved. A carriage drove into the yard, and General d'Acre was announced.

Sir Augustus d'Acre had served much, both in America and "on other grounds, Christian and heathen." He was a thorough specimen of the old school—pipeclay from heel to pigtail. He wore his frock-coat buttoned to the chin, white gaiters underneath his trousers, and had all the appearance of one of those officers of a former system, who would be like enough after wheeling into line, to take off his cocked hat, and say to the enemy with a polite bow, "Gentlemen of the French guard, give us your fire." I do not think he could have changed his pace from ordinary time had his house been about to be blown about his ears, and the train actually lighted.

The little boots darting into the room before him, with great glee, mispronounced his name in announcing him.

"General Cake, sir," said he, "to see you."

The general gave him a look as he passed, that seemed to shrivel the poor little fellow like parchment in a white heat. If there was one thing he prided himself upon more than another, it was his name. There were three hundred lashes conveyed in that one glance of his eye. The next moment it fell upon me, as I rose to receive him, and I felt at once like one of his own soldiers upon parade. Some men are born commanders, "some achieve command, and some have command thrust upon them;" but I am convinced that he who is not a soldier born, will never become one by education. As Kent said of King Lear, "this man had that in his countenance which he would fain call master—authority."

Before such a man it was not agreeable to appear on parade with a pair of black eyes. He heard the difficulties into which I had got without comment, and mine host was summoned with his bill, and cross-examined. The old gentleman perused

and dwelt upon it, item by item. Some things he taxed. Not even a bottle of soda water escaped his eye or was allowed to be overcharged. He then settled it, and rising, demanded if I was ready to depart.

"You have been expected at Portman-square for the last fortnight," said he. "We could not conceive where you had got to. I thought of putting you into the Hue-and-cry."

He listened to my account of my sojourn in London, and its consequences.

"The usual effects of youthful self-sufficiency," he remarked; "for the future, always follow your instructions. Had you come to my house, as your father directed, all this would have been avoided."

"But I thought, sir,——" I said.

"You thought!" he interrupted, sharply; "who gave you leave to think? You have chosen a profession, young man, in which the trouble of thinking will be spared you. Your father wrote to me that you meant to make the army your profession. If so, you must eat, drink, and sleep, sir, to the sound of the drum. What say you," he continued, opening the door, "shall we move off?"

"Am I to return, then, sir, with you to-night?" I inquired; "had I not better remain at this hotel till to-morrow morning? I fear I shall put you to inconvenience, by coming thus suddenly."

"As you please, Mr. Blount," said he, drily; "but I think you have had enough of hotels for some time. My carriage is here, sir, for the purpose of conveying you to my house, where you have been expected for the last fortnight. I advise you to take advantage of it, unless you prefer this dirty public-house."

Behold me, then, located in Portman-square; a member, for the present, of Sir Augustus d'Acre's family. The old gentleman was something of a philosopher, and his style of life was different from that of persons in his own sphere. His ideas were totally at variance with the times he lived in, and having in early days been much in the wilds of America, the sort of life incident to campaigning in that country had made him despise the luxuries of modern times, and the state of high civilization at which we have arrived. As soon as he became accustomed to the doleful appearance I cut, and he discovered my disposition was not so wild and reckless as he had been led to expect, he condescended to unbend from his usual stiffness of manner, and we became good friends.

My father's marriage had highly disgusted him, and at first he rather visited the sin of it upon me, his son. He had himself been married whilst in the army, and had several daughters, pure in heart and beautiful in person. They were all married, and his wife long dead, so that he lived almost alone.

in the great metropolis. He had once been in Parliament, but gave up politics with disgust; and being as punctilious on points of honour as a Spanish grandee, he professed he could not understand the nice distinctions of Members of Parliament and when honourable members, on the inquiry whether imputed rascality is personal to themselves, and their adversary assures them that he never intended to be personal, and the honour of the man is unimpeached; such explanation, he allowed, was highly civilized, but somewhat unintelligible. Equally extraordinary did it appear to him, on entering into fashionable society, to observe the state of high civilization, and the various distinctions there.

"They do these things quite different amongst the Sioux and the Pawnees," said he: "but then they want civilization."

"The clubs in London," said he to me one day, as we were sitting over our coffee after dinner—for he never, even when he had company, sat and fuddled himself with wine: "the clubs are a nuisance and a bane, where men learn every sort of selfish enjoyment. Society, such as I can just remember it in my early youth, in England is completely disorganized. No man is now happy at home, but all rush to the discomforts of a palace, in the shape of a club-house. Times are very much changed for the worse, or I perhaps fancy so. This seems to me to be the age of mediocrity: a most unamusing period. Whether it is that a life in the woods has spoilt me for enjoyment, or whether my occupation being gone, even in my old age I still sigh for the march, the parade, the volleying discharge from wing to wing along the blazing line, the embarkation and wafting of armed thousands upon the swelling tide, and all the circumstance of war,—I know not. But it seems to me that we have become exceedingly common-place. This generation seems rushing through life like a torrent; and even in fashionable life methinks we go too fast.

"Look at the eagle velocity with which we travel, too. Are we the more inclined for the road now than before? Are our enjoyments the greater? I, myself, can leave my residence in the country at eight o'clock in the morning, and arrive in London at ten. The railway, indeed, runs through my very park; but I do not consider myself a bit happier for that. On the contrary, I am about to sell the estate of my forefathers. I shall never go there again. Talking of the country, where are now the sports of the field, or what are they when you enter into them?

"I invited a neighbour of mine, the son of an early friend, to stay with me, and go over my preserves. We had a *battue*, as it is called, and my poor pheasants and hares were slaughtered in three or four days' amusement. What would our ancestors, who followed the chace from sunrise to sunset, say now to a hundred and thirty brace in one day to one gun on the high-

lands, the sportsman merely levelling and firing, with a troop of retainers in rear to load as fast as he discharged, and pick up the dead and wounded?"

The army in which he had served so long he was entirely devoted to, and often held forth on that subject; but he seemed to sorrow over it, and the idea of interference with its discipline since the glorious campaigns of the Peninsula, and other grounds, drove him to a pitch of madness when he spoke of it.

The British infantry, he calculated, was short by more than twenty thousand men, if it were to discharge the duties assigned to it, even in peace, with any consideration for the soldier. The military authorities, he thought, deeply sympathised and lamented over their fellow-soldiers, "the unwearied and indefatigable infantry of the line," and would be willing to alleviate the unceasing pressure on them, occasioned by the inadequacy of their numbers, for the purposes of colonial service and home duty.

Thus, then, the old general and myself became exceeding friendly, and before I had been a week under his roof, he had grown quite attached to my society. Our tastes seemed to suit exactly. He had never had a son, and I became one to him. I told him all my mishaps and misadventures in regard to my home, and its disagreeables, and he vowed he would set all to rights when my father came to London, before I joined. He accompanied me to the Horse-Guards, when I attended the levee of the Commander-in-chief and the military secretary. It was gratifying to me to look upon men so renowned, whose "high deeds achieved of knightly fame" had extended from pole to pole; men of honour, bright as their own swords, the true metal to stamp chivalry's imprint upon.

At his own request, I had taken into my service the little boots of the hotel. I found him the perfection of a valet; and managing to get acquainted with the domestics of Lord Hurricane, he frequently informed me how matters were progressing in Grosvenor-square; where, indeed, much had taken place to cause me uneasiness. The Duke of Hurricane, in a dreadful state of health, had been removed to his seat in Warwickshire, after the ball had at last been extracted; Miss Villeroy was with the Earl of Marston. Town had now become nearly empty, and the general and I had it all to ourselves. My father having returned from the continent, wrote me a severe letter upon my conduct whilst in town, refusing to advance me any further supply till after I had joined.

The old general bade me be of good cheer under these circumstances.

"Here is a cheque," said he, "for five hundred pounds to begin with. Meanwhile, I take this opportunity of telling you, that I have seen enough of your disposition and conduct to understand you perfectly, and like you extremely. I have five times as much as I can spend, and you may draw upon me

whenever you wish for a supply. My three children, as you know, are all well married. The smallest income of the husband of the youngest, who married a commoner, is ten thousand a-year. They want nothing of me, and I shall leave to you the bulk of my property. To-morrow I shall alter my will in your favour, we will then settle what you want for the present emergency; and on Saturday, you know, you are to set off for Ireland."

The goodness of the general was as unexpected as it was gratifying, and I returned my acknowledgments with tears in my eyes; not that I cared for the accession of fortune promised, but because I had found a friend who loved me, and seemed to understand my disposition.

It was on a lovely summer's evening, when the foregoing conversation took place. A few fashionables who had not left town, were snatching a breath of air within the enclosure of Portman-square, and the general proposed that I should take a turn and smoke my cigar there with him. We sauntered up and down upon the grass for some time, discussing matters of business connected with our family concerns. At length, he expressed himself tired, and proposed returning within doors.

"You need not come home so early," he said, looking at his watch; "as it is now only ten o'clock. Take this key, and let yourself in. I have given Goodwin, my man, leave to be absent for a couple of days. To-morrow, my dear young friend," he added, "I shall put you in a position to defy the machinations of the enemies you have told me of. Your father, too, I have no doubt, will come to his senses. I have always had some influence with him since he served under my command in Spain. To-morrow, we will have a morning devoted to business. I expect my solicitor to breakfast, and we will afterwards vary the scene, by driving out, and dining at Richmond. Good night, my boy. We'll rise betimes, and breakfast at eight to-morrow."

"Oh never
Shall sun that morrow see!"

A presentiment of evil haunted me as the old general left the enclosure; and I stood and watched till the street-door closed upon him, and shut him from my sight. I never saw him again in life. In his secure hour, "in the dead waste and middle of the night," my new valet, the little wretch I had hired from the Chaucer-like hotel, in Holborn, arose and cut the old soldier's throat from ear to ear, making off with all the plate in the house, and snatching up all the ready money he could lay his hands on. The immortal Shakspeare shows us murderers of various dispositions; some possessing the organ of destructiveness "fully developed," and others who are but the instruments of more bloody-minded rascals. From the crowned king, the crook-backed tyrant, who can coolly mo-

realize upon the aspiring blood of Lancaster as it sinks in the ground, and who confesses to the accomplishment of being able to smile, even as he deals with his victim, to the common cut-throats, such as Dighton, Forrest, and Tyrell;—from the noble Thane (for he is a noble gentleman, even in his worst of moods, and the beautiful things he gives utterance to in his sorrow and in his anger, almost persuade us to forgive him his misdeeds, sorely tempted and paltered with as he is, by fiends both fair and foul), from the noble Thane, then, to the shag-eared villain, “weary with disasters,” and ready to set his life on any chance, “to mend it, or be rid on’t:” Shakspeare, I say, shows us murderers, and brings them before us with a reality and fidelity of description, as Shakspeare alone can picture. We see them “in habit as they lived;” fellows by the hand of nature marked, quoted, and signed, to do “a deed of shame.”

But that this miserable specimen, the little boots of the hotel, whom I had adopted for a valet, and whose dimensions, in any thick sight, were almost invisible; that this “thin-faced gull,” this “forcible feeble,” should have done so horrible a deed, was to me so extraordinary, that I refused at first to credit the suspicion.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Oh, boys, this story
The world may read in me. My body’s mark’d
With Roman swords: and my report was once
First with the best of note.”

THIS fresh calamity did, indeed, completely unnerve me, and I felt myself a regular Boabdil el Chico. Such was the state of depression and discomfort into which this event threw me, that death itself would have been hailed by me as a welcome messenger.

“Fresh hopes,” however, says the poet Thomson, “are hourly sown in furrow’d brows;” and youth is the season in which, however we may be cast down, we most quickly rally. My London season was over; the difficulties into which I had so unwarily got, General d’Acre had luckily emancipated me from; I obtained a few days’ more leave from the Horse-guards, and my father having arrived in town the night before I was to start, we once more met.

I waited on him at Mivart’s Hotel, in Lower Brook-street. He saw me alone, although the whole Levison party was there with him. The late events of my own career had not rendered me a bit more amiable in his eyes; added to which, his young wife was now in that promising way which gave him hopes of an increase to his family.

"You are much altered, sir," said he, as soon as I entered the room; "I scarcely should know you. What a life is this you have been leading here! When do you join your regiment? or do you now mean to do so at all?"

"It is my intention, sir," said I, "to set off for Ireland, to-morrow."

"Have you followed my instructions, and asked for an exchange into the infantry?"

"I have not, sir," I replied.

"Why?"

"I do not like the infantry, and have never contemplated the necessity of exchanging into it. I would rather try——"

"So had not I," said he, interrupting me. "To be brief, sir, I cannot make you an allowance sufficient for that service, and shall, therefore, myself apply for an exchange. As you have got everything requisite, you must, however, now join the —— Hussars. But, at the same time, India must be the future field in which you must hope for renown."

Our interview soon ended, and with a somewhat heavy heart, I set off for the Emerald Isle, in the Bristol mail. Arrived at Bristol the next morning, I embarked on board a steamer, for Cork. It was rather a raw and gusty morning, I recollect, when we put forth; and before we were a couple of hours old at sea, it blew a perfect hurricane. It was my first impression of the mighty deep, and a tolerably deep one it made upon me. There were several youths who, like myself, were about to join their different regiments, on board. One of these who was due to an infantry regiment, then stationed at Cork, I may as well mention, as I subsequently grew better acquainted with him, and the companionship led to no beneficial result; on the contrary, I became involved in a considerable share of difficulty in his cause. There was also among us youth, an old and weather-beaten veteran, a man who had seen so much service in the East and West Indies, and who had followed the trade of arms so long, that his care-worn body's dissolution seemed but to await his rejoining the corps to which he belonged, in order that the volleying musketry might sound a requiem for him. Most of the passengers were so unwell, with the roughness of the weather, that they were fain to seek the cabin. The old veteran, myself, and three others, sheltering ourselves beneath our military cloaks, held converse upon deck. A sudden pitch of the vessel threw the old veteran from his seat, and sent him sprawling to the side. He was so weak that he could not arise, and I staggered across and lifted him up.

"Thanks, sir, thanks," said he. "My usual luck—it has happened to the weakest man in the ship. Ah! gentlemen, in me you see a miserable remnant of humanity; one whose career has almost run. Hardship hath done its work upon my poor body—dissipation hath done thrice the work of hardship. Rich sauces, generous wines, and the spicy viands of

the east and west have ta'en their turn upon me; climate, toil, disease, and villanous drugs have helped the completion; and more than one of the bullets of the Peninsula have found their billets amongst my muscles, veins, and arteries. I have been upon sick leave, sir, now a whole year; and finding the enemy in force upon my constitution, I resolved to cut the medical board and their infernal examinations, and rejoining my old corps, die as I have lived, 'with harness on my back.'

"I'm going to the old fiftieth, sir, to give up the ghost, and only hope I shall be permitted to reach Fermoy, that I may again see mine old comrades, and the regiment once more on parade; and then the sooner this carcase returns to its mother earth the better."

"You despond, sir," said I, "you'll recover if you keep up your spirits. The sight of your old companions in arms will cheer you."

"Thank ye," he said, languidly, "thank ye; so the Great Medicine in London told me.—'Keep your mouth closed,' said he, 'and avoid the bottle, and you'll recover.' But, Lord! sir, I never could withstand temptation. I'm the martyr of indigestion; and the moment I touch food, I'm in the torments of the damned. Brandy and water is all I live upon; my medical man allowed me but three slices of dry toast daily, and a glass of Madeira; but I know I shall commit an indiscretion when the nausea of this voyage is over. I'm as sure to eat as to land—if we ever do land—for the weather does not seem inclined to mend. The captain looks anxious, and the sailors are silent and solemn—a sure sign we shall have a bad night on't, gentlemen. If I could find one or two of the men to help me down below, I should be thankful. Curse the sea, say I, for I never see a ship now but it reminds me of the weary months I have spent on board the tubs of transports in which we used to be sent out, and wrecked, in former days. Well, gentlemen, since you say you are just joining your different regiments, I wish you joy; it's a glorious profession; I've lived in it many years, and passed my time not so unpleasantly."

"I've heard," said the youngster before mentioned, "that it's necessary to fight a duel on first joining, sir. How is that to be managed genteelly, and without giving offence in the corps? I should wish to do like others. Must I tread upon some officer's favourite corn, or had I better wait for a gentleman to tweak me by the nose? It is all one to me;—equal to either fortune."

The veteran looked at the youth askance,—“Necessary to do what, sir?” said he; “fight a duel! Young man, you had better not join with that idea impressed upon your mind, or you will find yourself in a scrape, perhaps, before you are very old in your regiment.”

“How so?” said the youth, who was something of a boaster

in his style and manner. "I suppose, I can fight my way out of it, if I do get into a scrape? I'm not altogether unpractised, and can touch off a blue-bottle fly on a man's proboscis at twelve paces, with ease."

"You will find it difficult to get an opportunity of doing so," returned the veteran, "if you are known to join with such sentiments and intentions. You will be voted a nuisance in the corps, and cut accordingly. Take my advice, young man, look upon your brother officers as friends, not targets for your pistol practice. You will find before you have been many years in the army, plenty of opportunities of displaying your valour, without seeking it in the mess-room. That man's an arrant coward," added the veteran aside to me; "I'd stake my life upon it."

The youth laughed: he wished to be thought a cavalier of the first water, and to make an impression upon his auditors. I soon afterwards helped our veteran friend to his cot, where, after administering a glass of his favourite beverage, I left him to his repose.

The night was, as he had prognosticated, a rough one. So much so, that the fires were put out by the seas which washed into the vessel, half the passengers went to prayers, and all next day we lay at the mercy of the winds and waves, like a helpless log upon the waters. At last we made the Cove, and landing, hired some jaunting cars, and arrived safely at Cork on the morning after.

In the coffee-room of one of the hotels, our veteran friend, myself, and military fellow passengers, sat down to enjoy the first comfortable meal we had taken since we left Bristol. Tea, coffee, and new laid eggs, are a most delightful treat after the discomfort of a storm at sea. Cork is, moreover, famous for salmon, deliciously dressed, and served up in sheets of clean writing-paper.

Our veteran friend had distrusted his powers of forbearance, and albeit he particularly ordered the gossoon to bring him nothing but a small slice of dry toast, no sooner did the tea and coffee, with the other creature comforts, appear, than, after eyeing them for a few minutes, he drew himself to our table, and commenced eating like a famished wolf, or a half-starved tiger.

"This salmon will be my bane," said he, as he stopped to take breath. "The first time I ever landed at Cork, thirty years ago, I remember breakfasting on it, in this very room. Twelve times I have been across the Atlantic since that, and yet I remember it as if it were but yesterday. Delicious treat! Waiter, more salmon here, more muffins here, another devil, and more brandy; my stomach is like a ready braced brass drum, sir, but I cannot halt now. Fermoy," he continued, dolefully, "I shall never see thee, after all; farewell 50th, I shall die of salmon! Help me to another slice, gentle-

men. Thank ye! that will do; yes, I shall die of salmon, and George Chacot will get the step."

"There's many a true word spoken in jest," says the vulgar proverb. Captain Wornout positively died from eating that salmon. He was seriously ill before he left the table, and in two days he died of inflammation of the intestines. By that time, however, I had reached Limerick, and become acquainted with my brother officers of the —th Hussars.

First joining a regiment is an event of no slight importance in a man's life. The —th was a crack corps, as it is termed, and consequently was officered by men of rank and fortune, gentlemen in every sense of the term; and by them I was received with marks of kindness and good feeling. At least half of them were connected with the nobles of the land, and the remainder were the sons of your fine old English esquires; —men, whose princely allowances would necessarily make them unwilling to follow any other but the profession of arms. Amongst gentlemen of this rank, then, I commenced my military career; and being commanded by an officer who was like a father to the whole regiment, and at the same time a strict disciplinarian, and, moreover, who had seen much service in the last war, I soon began to forget my late mishaps and misfortunes, in the excitement and splendour of the soldier's life.

Our duties in Ireland were not much relished by my companions; to me, however, all was delightful, because all was new. Whether, therefore, in the pursuit of duty, I was engaged with the troop in the capture of a still among the bogs, or driving pigs, cows, and sheep, upon a tithing expedition, or keeping the streets of some town during an election riot, or even escorting some wretched prisoner to the gallows' foot, and mounting guard whilst the finisher of the law performed his office upon him amidst the infuriated pisantry, I was equally content to find myself obeying my orders, and playing the part assigned to me with all true duty.

Six months after I joined, we were ordered to England, to the great delight of the whole regiment, and shortly after our kettledrums and trumpets were sounding through the streets of Manchester. At Manchester we found our presence of some slight use in keeping the turbulent artificers occasionally from half demolishing the town, for which service we had the favour of meeting with the dowered daughters of some of the millocrats, and dancing with them at their soulless and dull balls.

It is one of the peculiarities of a soldier's life, that he can look back upon more homes than the man of any other profession. The service necessarily makes him a welcome sojourner in so many delightful places, in which he becomes attached, not only to the inhabitants, but to the localities around, that each quarter appears the spot most favoured by

nature, and containing the most amiable of residents. The intimate of most families of condition in the neighbourhood, and admitted more into the bosom of such family than any other chance visitor, he is generally the favourite of the household; welcomed by the elders, because assuredly a person of gentility and education, and taking precedence amongst the younger, the more thoughtless, the lovely, and the gay, from the chivalry of his appearance, (with horse to ride, and weapon to wear,) and the devil-may-care easy and careless life he professes. Such being the case, he becomes, if not professedly the lover, at least the friend and confidant of every bevy of pretty lasses in every town or village he stays six months at, and remembers in after-life a little romance connected with every such quarter. Then comes the route, the march, and the new scene, just as he had begun to feel himself the intimate friend of the good folks he must so abruptly bid farewell to, and by whom he is regarded with the same kindly feelings. Then, as I said, comes the fresh quarter, the new acquaintance, and the like endeavour at making himself an agreeable guest, with generally the same success.

The cavalry have more of this than the infantry; as, during twenty years of a man's life in the dragoons, he stands a chance, what with outbreaks and disturbances of one kind or other, to visit in turn, almost all the towns and villages in England with his troop of free lances.

And who can wonder at this feeling of good-will towards him of the chivalrous post and laced jacket? who can be surprised if the eye of the loveliest of the sex should glance a far-off look, when some lord of sash and epaulette is found amidst the gay and festive scene, since the hand which has sought the honour of a set, and so gently leads the dance, can also wield the broadsword for protection of those halls of dazzling light, and rein the fiery steed in full career, like a Mameluke?

The amusing life of this sort, which for the last six or seven months I had been leading, had in a great measure obliterated many of the disagreeables I had before been mixed up in, and I began to feel myself altogether a different person. The last place I had been resident with my detachment was Ripon in Yorkshire, and the morning's march lay through the celebrated watering-place, Harrogate.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Away, you cut-purse rascal! you filthy bung, away! By this wine, I'll thrust my knife in your mouldy chaps, an you play the saucy cuttle with me. Away, you bottle-ale rascal!—since when I pray you, sir?—What, with two points on your shoulder? Much."

"You are a gentleman, and a gamester, sir—

I confess both; they are both the varnish of a complete man."

SHAKSPERE.

HARROWGATE was in its palmy days when I visited it. At that period, half the rank and fashion of England were to be found at the various hotels, situate upon that Scotchified and barren-looking common, and a more delightful and altogether amusing watering-place it would be difficult to imagine. Most of the great sporting men of the day were also to be found at Harrowgate during the season, and consequently amongst the other diversions and modes of passing away the time, high play was constantly resorted to by many of the visitors. Indeed, it was no uncommon thing for the servants of the hotels to find the tables still filled with players, when at early dawn, they came to set the house in order.

As I arrived at the entrance of the village of High Harrowgate from Ripon, I was met by an orderly dragoon, who had been despatched with an official letter from the commanding officer, desiring me to halt with my detachment until further orders at this watering-place, and I found myself billeted at the house I had in my boyish days so frequently heard of,—the "Dragon at Harrowgate."

It was about the hour of noon when I halted my power before the little terrace upon which some of the company were assembled.

The arrival of a party of dragoons upon the march, who were to be billeted in the village, the officer quartering himself at their home, was an event which of course produced quite a sensation amongst the idlers of a fashionable resort; and all the circumstance and appearance of my "plump of spears" lent me so much favour in the eyes of the assemblage, that I found myself quite the lion of the hotel.

It was on the evening of my first day at Harrowgate, that the tables being drawn, it was "idlesse all." The gentlemen were gradually leaving their wine-flagons in the dining-room, and joining the ladies, who, seated at a long table, were preparing to make tea. At the Green Dragon at Harrowgate there was generally a sort of *prima donna*, who led the ton, without whose approval a new-comer would be likely to find his stay rendered not only unpleasant, but even (if an upstart *parvenu*) impossible. Many an unfortunate wight was fain to

retire from the aristocratic Dragon in these days, and betake himself to the Manchester Warehouse, as the Crown Inn was called.

After going through my stable duties, I lounged into the tea-room, and made my way to the upper end. About a dozen ladies were generally employed in the business of tea-making, each having her little tray before her, furnished with appliances and means to furnish forth to some twenty applicants for the beverage; and, thus managed, it was an introduction to the company, and made the whole party intimate as one family.

The Marchioness of Richborough was seated at the end of the room as I approached. Beside her was another lady, who officiated in pouring out tea and coffee to the various applicants who bowed at her shrine. The marchioness was a beautiful woman, of some six or seven-and-twenty years of age, with the form of a goddess, and the brow of a queen.

The clatter of my approach, being in uniform, drew the eye of the marchioness upon me, and with the eye of her ladyship, necessarily I was honoured by the observance of that portion of the company immediately around her.

It was a critical moment for the new arrival, if he cared for being in good odour amongst the assemblage, for the Marchioness of Richborough was the leader of the ton. Had her ladyship bent but a supercilious eye-brow upon the cornet, after putting her glass to her eye, he would have been voted not the thing in her presence, and perhaps cut by the company. As it was, she desired her lovely friend to pour out a cup of coffee for the officer of the —th, and desiring her husband, the marquis, who was conversing with some ladies near, to invite me to the table, made room for me beside herself.

Although I knew neither the name, nor the high rank of the beautiful creature I was sitting beside, we were as intimate in five minutes as if we had been acquainted for five years. The high bred and the exalted in rank sometimes dare to overstep the *triste* manners of English society, and permit those whom they approve to a close and quick intimacy. My hussar jacket was in some sort my passport, and my appearance and good mien seconded that; so that the marchioness condescended to be affable, and entertained me with the history of two or three of the assembled company.

“You shall know the natives of the strand you are cast upon,” she said. “That lady, with the five raw-boned, tartar-faced daughters is the wife of Sir Mungo McTurk. She has visited this table d’hôte six several seasons, and each season has got off one of her fair daughters. There is a determination to succeed about Lady McTurk that is most praiseworthy, and she will succeed again accordingly. That’s her victim, the heavy-looking youth who is seated beside her youngest unmarried. That odd-looking, farmer-like man, who is railing against the old lady making tea for him, calling

the hotel a pot-house, and all assembled rogues and vagabonds, is the celebrated Joe Armstrong, a great man on the turf, and descended from one of the oldest families in Yorkshire. Beside him, silent, good-tempered-looking, and unassuming, is the Marquis of Queensferry. He is quietly waiting the St. Leger, that he may lose his customary ten thousand before he returns to town. The lady on the other side, with the melancholy-looking brace of daughters, is the celebrated Lady Merrimoth, the great whist-player. She has been known to sit up, with slight intermission, for a whole week at a time here. To-night you will see her with bank-notes in her lap piled nearly to her chin, and setting the fee-simple of an estate upon the turn-up of a card. The two young ladies, her offspring, she generally despatches to a boarding school at hand, whilst the season lasts. To-night they have a half-holiday, in consequence of our intended ball at the Dragon. Her career is given in a line of the immortal Pope, 'a youth of folly, an old age of cards.'

"That old gentleman, who looks so nervous and diffident, with the pig-tail, powdered hair, and old-world coat, is a retired member of your profession, a half-pay dragoon. He joined the third Dragoons in the year 1760, and, however you may smile and doubt, it is a well-known fact, that his mother brought him to the regiment, and herself placed him in charge of the colonel. He was an only son, and the sweet youth, being heir to a large patrimony here in Derbyshire, took a fancy for the profession of arms. Being a perfect cousin Slender, he was accompanied as I have mentioned: remained in the regiment some six or seven years, and, on the breaking out of the war, his mother 'sold him out,' and fetched him back to Mostyn Hall. There sits 'the deliberate simpleton,' a perfect representative of Sir Walter Scott's Dumbdikes. I can no more," said the marchioness, preparing to rise. "The rest are all people of some note in the country, and doubtless will develop themselves for your especial amusement and edification. Flora, my love, come," she said to her companion, "we must even prepare for the coming assembly, as I suppose it will be expected of us to make our appearance."

Saying this, my fair friend arose, and left the tea-table, followed by the nymph, her friend.

"Pray who is that lady?" I inquired of a tall military-looking man standing near.

"Is it me you are asking?" returned Major O'Doherty. "Come, that's droll any how; and you, too, been as intimate with her as if you'd been her next of kin. By the powers! I've been here at the Dragon three weeks, and sitting at table only six from her, and never exchanged so much as, May I have the honour of taking wine with your ladyship? By the Lord! I've never been able to conciliate an acquaintance in all that time, and you've been learning the history of all the folks in

the house from her own sweet, condescending lips (lips that I have never kissed, nor ever shall), and now ask me her name. Sure it's funning you are. Why, it is the Marchioness of Richborough, and her friend, Lady Flora Clinton. By Jasus! man, you're in luck: by the same token, she's taken a fancy to your spurs and sabretash."

"Her ladyship's something caustic in her remarks upon us to-night, major," said a Scotch baronet, who had been seated near us, and who now joined in the conversation: "she is o'er fond of the tables hersel, to be so severe upon Lady Merrimoth. Troth, but she's like enough hersel to make the marquis's woods feel the axe, an she lose as mickle every season as she has done this. Gad! but she's a right vent'rous player. Heard ye, mon, o' the match she's to play the night."

"By the powers! you say true," returned the other, "it is to-night she plays, and, by my conscience, it's near the hour."

As these gentleman carried on their discourse now in an under-tone, I left my place, and the company now also beginning to disperse, I strolled out into the village. On my return, seeing the billiard-room lighted up, I entered it. The room, which those who have ever frequented the Dragon will remember is at one end of the terrace, was on this occasion filled with company, who sat and stood almost two deep around it. A match of some importance I therefore conjectured was being played, and elbowing my way to the front, was sufficiently astonished at seeing my beautiful friend the marchioness as one of the players; whilst the marquis, her spouse, standing beside the marker, officiated for him in the duty of scoring up the game.

The match was for a large sum I found on inquiry, and the opponent of the fair marchioness was a professed gamester, who had somehow, in the liveliness of conversation, inveigled her into it; having come from London with his associates, for the very purpose of pigeoning the lady. He was, besides, a gentleman who prided himself vastly upon his reputation as a duellist, having shot several opponents in the various affairs of honour in which he had been engaged. The indelicacy of playing billiards with a lady for large stakes, who had evidently little more skill in the mace than the bagatelle-table had given her, was great; but it was evident to me, as well as to the whole room, that the *leg* was taking advantage of her ignorance of the game to win to a large amount. The marquis seeming, however, amused as he indulged his lively spouse, and the attendant company appearing unwilling to interfere, I remained quietly for a space to watch the game.

"A hundred pounds to five I make this hazard," said Captain Surecard.

"I'll take it," said the marchioness.

"Not so," said one of the spectators; "he can't miss it. Cry off, Lady Richborough."

"Silence, sir," cried the captain, angrily. "Her ladyship wants no advice of yours; she has accepted my bet. I'll not allow any person to interfere with my game."

The captain played, and won the hazard.

"A foul stroke, sir," said I immediately.

"A what?" cried the captain, turning fiercely round. "Who spoke when I was playing?—not you?"

"I spoke, sir," said I, pushing to the front; "I said that was a foul stroke. I repeat the observation."

The captain stood aghast for the moment. At length he threw down his cue, and strode towards me.

"I'll bet you a hundred guineas, sir," said he, "you don't utter another word whilst I am playing."

"Who shall say me nay?" returned I, smiling at his face of ire.

The marchioness laughed outright, for the scene perfectly delighted her.

The captain, livid with rage, continued to gaze at me, as if ruin leaped from his eyes.

"Proceed, sir, with your game," said I; "the table waits. I'll take your bet; done's the word. A hundred guineas upon it."

The captain strode to the table, took up his cue, and was about to strike his ball; as he did so, I stepped up to the table.

"Another foul stroke, by heaven!" said I.

The *leg* threw down his cue, and turned like lightning towards me, whilst three or four of the company started from their seats.

"I believe, sir, I am winner," said I; "the bet was a cool hundred."

"Your card, sir!" roared the duellist; "by heaven, I'll teach you a lesson for this!"

I handed him a card immediately.

"'Tis well," said he; "look to yourself, young man—your life is spanned: I am Captain Surecard."

In saying this, he evidently thought that the very sound of his awfully celebrated name would strike me all of a heap; but, as at that time I had never heard of him, it failed to do so.

"Look you to yourself, Captain Surecard," said I, growing warm with the debate, "and somewhat moderate your tone, or perchance I may teach you a lesson here which will cool your vehemence. Meanwhile, respect the presence of the lady, sir. Continue your game, and beware how you attempt foul play, or, by heaven, I'll unmask you the instant I see you take advantage."

The duellist was completely taken aback, his jaw dropped

as he stared the astonishment he felt; and, turning he resumed his cue.

"You shall hear, sir," said he, with shut teeth, "soon as I have finished my match. Meanwhile, do not leave the room."

The game proceeded, and, to the delight of the lively marchioness, such was the nervous agitation consequent upon the rage and discomfort of her opponent, that (as he gave large odds), owing to his missing almost every hazard, the tables were completely turned, and she won every game.

"You'll be at the ball," said she, as she quitted the room with her husband. "Come quickly, I'm uneasy at this business. Leave the room with us now."

"I'll follow your ladyship," said I, when without the room, "in a few minutes."

"Lord Richborough," continued the marchioness, addressing her husband, "remain with Mr. Blount. The chances are, that being strange here, he may need a friend. I'm sorry, for my sake, you have involved yourself in this broil, Mr. Blount; but his lordship must see you through it. Appoint him your friend."

The good-natured nobleman, who, it appeared, was in the habit of being ruled by his more clever spouse, instantly relinquished the arm of the marchioness, and, taking mine, we turned to re-enter the billiard-room. As I did so, I was confronted by Major O'Doherty, who instantly accosted me.

"I am commissioned, sir," said he, "by my friend, Captain Surecard, to desire you will give him an instant meeting; since nothing but your blood can wash out the public insult you have offered him. Name your friend."

"I'll speak to the valiant captain himself," said I, moving towards him.

"Pardon me, sir," said the major, roughly seizing me by the arm, "that's irregular; I cannot allow you to do so."

"Remove your hand, sir," said I, "instantly from my arm, or I'll knock you down."

"D—n!" said the major, "do you address this language to me? You shall answer this, sir."

"When I have satisfied your friend," said I, "I'll attend to you, Major O'Doherty;" saying which, followed by the marquise, I re-entered the billiard-room.

It was now in some little confusion, and the company in high debate. Captain Surecard had many gambling partisans present; but the majority of the company were sporting gentlemen, who, formed into little knots, discussed the recent transaction. The captain and his friends were meantime loud in debate; and, walking to the end of the room where they were, I confronted my man.

"You have sent a friend to me, sir," said I, "have you not?"

"I have, sir," roared the duellist; "I demand an instant meeting."

"Doubtless; the sooner we meet the better: that we may do so speedily, as I believe I am winner of a hundred pounds, I demand its instant payment."

"I shall not do so," returned the *leg*. "Give me satisfaction for the affront you have offered. Here is my friend; appoint one on your side instantly, before worse befall you."

"Not till you pay me the money won," I replied, coolly.

"To the devil with your winnings!" said the captain, working himself into a rage; "it was no bet. Meet me, sir, or, by heavens, I post your name in this very billiard-room, and all over Harrowgate, as a poltroon. Marker, pen, ink, and paper; by heaven, I'll stick you up here this instant, unless you accept my challenge."

"And I, sir," said I, "in return for your intended favour, beg to inform you, that if you put pen to paper to do so, I will beat you into a jelly with this billiard cue I hold in my hand. Your blackguardism will not serve with me, Captain Surecard, nor shall you leave this spot, until you have acknowledged or paid the debt of honour you have incurred. After which, I will render you satisfaction across this billiard-table, if it be your wish. Suffice it, sir, I remember you now. A certain Captain Catchflat was once your companion, if I mistake not. Think not, sir," I continued, "that I mean to evade a meeting; for, as soon as you have settled this debt, I will appoint Lord Richborough my friend."

The duellist was struck. His overbearing style left him, and he turned to consult his friends. Meanwhile, I placed myself near the door, in order to intercept his retreat; for I determined to make an example of this fellow, who, I firmly believed, was as great a villain as his sometime companion, my London friend. Several of the gentlemen present now gathered around me, and upheld the course I was pursuing.

The marquis, meanwhile, who had quietly watched the proceeding in his easy, good-tempered way, which formed a striking contrast to my excited style, addressed me, taking my arm, and leading me aside as he did so.

"You have overturned my plans entirely, young man," he said, "by this proceeding. It was my intention that this bullying scoundrel should fleece my wife; for which purpose I sanctioned his playing the match you interrupted. The Marchioness of Richborough has suddenly contracted a violent passion for play, which will, unless nipped in the bud, ruin her health and happiness. It has been my system, whilst here at Harrowgate, to allow of her being plucked and pigeoned by these watering-place sharpers in every possible way, in order to show her the folly of the thing. *Voilà!* it is now finished for the present. This business interrupts it, and we must arrange that at once. It is unfortunate as it stands, because

as an affair must now take place, I ought naturally to stand as principal, instead of second."

"My lord," said I, "I beg ten thousand pardons for my intemperate zeal. I certainly am, without exception, the most unlucky dog in the universal world."

"Say no more," said his lordship, laughing. "The course you have pursued with this man is the right one. He must pay you first, that's concluded."

Major O'Doherty now approached; upon which, I instantly introduced the marquis as my friend.

"Does Cornet Blount still demand payment of the bet he asserts he has won, before he consents to meet Captain Surecard?" said the major.

"Decidedly, major," said the marquis. "He demands instant payment of the hundred pounds he has won; after which, I am ready on his part, to arrange a meeting."

"That, then, is the sum," said the major, placing in my hand bank-notes to the amount. "See, sir, that they are right."

I took the notes, and, after counting, returned them to the hands of Major O'Doherty.

"It is sufficient," said I. "Give back the money to your principal, with this further message, that, although I know him to be a practised gamester, and an abominable cheater, for my own satisfaction, not his, mind you, after what has passed, I choose to grant him the meeting. The Marquis of Richborough will arrange matters with you."

So saying, I turned upon my heel, and left the billiard-room.

When I entered the hall of the hotel, I found a servant, apparently waiting me, who delivered a note from the marchioness, desiring me to favour her with a visit in her sitting-room.

I found her ready dressed for the ball, playing with her only child before she dismissed it to its bed. Anything more lovely than the mother and child you might search sea and land without being able to discover. The child was about four years old, and beautiful as Cupid; whilst the mother might have formed a study, in her voluptuous beauty, for the Queen of Love herself.

She rose to receive me as soon as I entered.

"I am glad you are come," said she; "for I have been very uneasy. My somewhat indelicate match with yonder gambler has led you into a serious scrape, I fear. Tell me, is it all amicably arranged. I know Richborough so well, and his tact and management, that I am sure he has settled everything without disagreeables of any sort."

Of course I assured her that she was right.

"It will be a lesson to me," said she: "and in order that I may not suffer in your good opinion, you shall know the folly

which made me commit the further indiscretion of playing a public match in the billiard-room of the Dragon. My throne here is troubled, like all other thrones, by an adverse faction. Lady Macdonald heads this cabal; and being surrounded by a clique of sanctified tabbies, and *parvenu beaux*, they carp at all my doings, rail at my followers, and hold up their hands in horror at all the amusements by which I seek to keep my subjects from *ennui*, and ease the anguish of the torturing hours of a watering-place. The fact of my having once or twice lost a few paltry hundreds at whist, has been so animadverted upon, that, in order to show my contempt for their narrow ideas, I resolved to play a match at billiards for a couple of hundred pounds, and thus 'out-Herod Herod' in recklessness of their contempt."

The marquis now entering the room, I arose to accompany him, in order to hear the result of his arrangement of time and place.

"There is no occasion for us to quit the apartment," said he, answering my look and motion. "Luckily for you there is to be no fight. The company attendant, at the instigation of that eccentric Joe Armstrong, have voted that your antagonist should be expelled this hotel, together with his associates. The publicity your affair has given them, has completely blown them. It is therefore settled that they leave the Dragon forthwith, or they will be kicked out; and a committee have settled that you are *not* to meet Captain Surecard. If you do, you will yourself be expelled. As your friend I have settled, therefore, everything on your part honourably and properly.

Greatly relieved, I poured forth my thanks to the marquis, who retired to prepare for the ball-room, committing the marchioness to my escort, and taking his boy in his arms.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"The beginning, the middle, the end of love, is nothing but sorrow, vexation and misery."

ANON.

"Still flows the tide of my unhappiness,
The stars shoot mischief."

OLD PLAY.

AN affair of this sort naturally cemented my intimacy with the Marchioness of Richborough, whose lovely manners, innocence and beauty, made her a dangerous companion to a young man of my disposition. Although I could have sworn, by Cupid's strongest bow, "by his best arrow with the golden head," that no face or form could ever have driven the impres-

sion of Miss Villeroy from my heart, I fear the lovely Marchioness was for the time all powerful, and that I thought not, whilst in her society, of my former vows.

"O heaven! were man but constant, he were perfect,
That one error fills him with faults."

Suffice it, that no party of pleasure was formed, no amusement projected, in which I was not her companion and aid-de-camp. To be thus, and not to love, was not to be mortal. Yet, although this heavenly paragon hung upon my arm during our walks in the day, danced with me at night, and selected me as her partner in every amusement she was engaged in, whatever of love was in our hearts, there was no word of it crossed our lips.

"I loved and was beloved again,"

that was apparent to me from a thousand signs and tokens, which lovers as surely discover, as that they live and move.

As is generally the case in such cases, all the world saw it but him who was most interested; and the good-natured and amiable marquis, finding his lovely wife so well amused and so happy, set off to see his horse start for the St. Leger, and lose his money at Doncaster.

It was on the third day after his departure, that Lady Richborough and myself, watching the splendour of the setting sun, were seated upon the turf, amidst the trees and shrubs in the gardens of Plumpton. Those who have ever visited Harrowgate will remember this lovely spot; the gardens of Plumpton being one of the places always shown to the visitors.

The marchioness had headed a pic-nic party there that day, some few individuals of which had left, and others were sauntering and amusing themselves in different parts of the grounds, just before they returned homewards. The marchioness and myself were seated upon a verdant bank which overlooked the lake; a romantic legend was attached to the place, which was called the lover's leap. Something of the story I remembered, and pointed out to my companion how, in bygone days, a youthful hunter, in leaping upon a jutting fragment of rock, which was detached from the promontory we sat on, and at the same time held his blood-hounds in the leash, (the dogs having refused the leap,) dragged him backwards in the attempt, and before the eyes of his beloved he was dashed against the rocks, and drowned in the lake.

The romance of the story and the beauty of the scene delighted us. The only child of my fair hearer was with us: indeed, in all her excursions that beautiful boy was her companion. It seemed, indeed, that she lost enjoyment of the hour if he was from her sight. The proud feeling, however, of having been thus elected by this highly gifted and beautiful

woman as her intimate, and allowed to be to her as a brother, was almost too much for any man to bear, and "keep the disposition that he owed." As I kissed the bright and laughing boy who played in my arms, I kissed him for his mother's sake.

The little varlet now screaming and laughing like a sprite, and clambering up my back in his playful mood, made the groves around echo with his joyous laugh and shriek of perfect delight. One moment he pelted us with the sweet summer buds he plucked from the bank on which we were seated, and the next he started off and hid himself from sight in the covert of some clump of evergreens close at hand. For awhile, the doating mother watched him with her beaming eyes, echoed his laugh with her own musical voice, and encouraged his engaging mirth, rising every now and then to chase him into some bosky retreat; at length, wearied with the sport, she bade him amuse himself whilst she rested, desiring the attendant nursemaid to seek for and summon her carriage. "Hence," said she, playfully, to the beautiful boy, "hence to kill cankers in the musk rose bud, or 'war with rear mice for their leathern wings.' Go kill me a red-hipped humble-bee on the top of a thistle."

Seating herself, she leaned her cheek upon her hand, as her eye wandered over the bright waters of the lake, and watched the splendour of the setting sun, with the pine woods on its margin, empurpled, shadowy, and massive-looking, as the glorious orb sank to rest.

"O that I were a glove upon that hand," methought, as I gazed upon her half-averted and chiselled features, "that I might touch that cheek."

I know not whether I had given any part of my thoughts tongue, or whether the marchioness guessed my admiration from my silence, but she suddenly turned her head, and our eyes met. The expression of mine betrayed me as clearly as if I had written a volume; and her pure and eloquent blood spoke in her cheeks. The embroidered glove I so much admired, was in my hand: unconsciously I had retained it, whilst the sportful boy had fought me with it in his joyous mirth. She put out her hand for it, smiling in the innocence of her heart, only as such a radiant creature could smile. "Sweet ornament, that decks a thing divine," said I, as I resigned it. In doing so, our hands met, and seizing upon the snowy offering I carried it to my lips. I could hardly think on what I had done, I feared the marchioness would be offended at my boldness; look on her again I dared not.

The next moment, uttering a piercing cry, with eyes like a maniac's starting from their sockets, she leaped up from the bank she had been seated upon, and stood on tiptoe, the personification of some nymph suddenly gone distracted.

Hark! was that the dipping of the teal-duck in the bright

waters of the lake, or was it the splash of the otter beneath the rock. A sort of wailing cry disturbed the silence of the grove as I gazed upon the lady in awe, astonishment, and fear. The truth flashed upon my mind in an instant. It was her beautiful, her own little Lord Eskdale, had fallen into the lake. With the speed of thought I leapt to my feet, cleared the intervening space between where I had been seated, and bounding from the promontory, stood upon the isolated fragment of rock which rose from the sedgy lake, and looked around.

The situation commanded the base of the rocks for some distance, and beyond a jutting promontory near at hand, I beheld a dissolving circle, scarcely defined, in the water, some fifty yards from the spot on which I stood. Marking well the spot, I once more ventured the hunter's leap, and, untrammelled by his dogs, regained the promontory. The marchioness was nowhere to be seen. I thought not of her, but dashing through the bushes in my descent, like one possessed with a demon, I made for the margin of the lake, and plunged headlong in; had it been a sea of flaming brimstone, I should have done the same.

So well had I marked the spot, that the child's hat was the first thing I beheld floating before me, as I rose to the surface, and instantly diving, I saw, seized, and brought him up. To gain the bank with my prize, was then but the work of a few minutes, and to my joy, I saw that the boy was still alive. His clothes had spread wide, and mermaid-like awhile they bore him up. He had but just sunk, when I dived and reclaimed him. My delight at having saved the beautiful son of the marchioness, the next moment gave place to fear. Where was the marchioness herself? I had observed her dart down the vista she had last seen her child playing in before she had forgotten him in contemplation of the glorious sunset. The path she had taken led to a part of the rock which beetled over the lake.

Surmising the dreadful truth, I shouted for assistance, and resigning the young lord to the nursery-maid, who at that moment flew to the spot, I threw off my coat, and once more took to the stream. It was, however, in vain that I dived and swam around the spot like some Newfoundland dog in search of a stone;—the depths of the lake retained their prey: and oh, vulgar death for one so lovely! the marchioness, like Ophelia, was drowned.

It was the morning after this untoward event, that I was seated in the private sitting-room of my sometime beautiful friend, at the Dragon, at Harrowgate. The marquis was with me. He had been summoned from Doncaster by express. His little boy was in his arms, and to his repeated demand for his dear mamma, the marquis had but one answer—his flowing tears. It was the first ten minutes of our meeting since his

arrival and the catastrophe. He had sent to me on the instant of his coming; and, like a culprit who had done a murder, I attended his summons. Four reeking posters stood at the inn-door, with his travelling-carriage, their distended nostrils and steaming flanks, telling the rate at which he had travelled.

"This has been a dreadful business, sir," said he, as he arose and paced the room; "a dreadful and melancholy termination to our visit here. Nor can I altogether understand it, although you have told the tale over to me six several times. Oh, unhappy chance that took me to that cursed race! You saved my boy, and I thank you. But oh, sir, how have I deserved that this affliction should light so heavily upon me? How could these things occur?"

The marquis here became so much moved that he sank in the chair beside him, and I arose and took the child from his arms. After a while, he subdued his emotion, and again addressing me, in an irritable tone, "How," said he, "is it possible that such an accident could have occurred when you say three persons were with the child. Where was the maid at that moment?"

I told him: "Sent to summon the carriage."

"The rest of this cursed pic-nic party," he continued, "were away, you say; had left the gardens. Humph!—strange, to say the least of it; and the marchioness and yourself—gazing at the sun setting upon the lake; and the child was—I need not ask—in the lake! Summon that nurse," said he, rising, and ringing the bell violently.

The menial appeared, like Niobe, all tears. At sight of her master she managed to burst into a roar, like a wild Indian—the usual practice with persons of this sort.

"Silence! woman," said the marquis, sternly. "I know the value of your grief of old, well as I now know the value of your services. Your tears are now no longer worth shedding—you are no longer servant of mine. I sent for you to hear *your* version of this affair, not to hear your screams."

"My lord," said I, "this is unkindly said. I have uttered the plain unvarnished truth in this business; and, could my life have repaired it, I had died to save——"

"Grief, like impatience, sir," said the marquis, interrupting me, "hath its privilege. What made you, mistress," he continued, turning to the nurse, "leave your charge, whilst this gentleman entertained my wife?"

"My lady's order, sir, to seek the carriage," returned the sobbing nurse. "Oh, lor! oh, lor! kill me, sir, if you will, but don't say another angry word to me. Don't blame me for it, or I shall die raving mad. Oh, dear!"

"Your mistress had the child with her, then? You left it in her charge?"

"Yes, sir," said the servant. "She bade Lord Eskdale go and catch mice and humble bees amongst the thistles; those

were her very words. Oh, my God ! I shall never forget them, if I live to be a thousand years old. As I returned from the gate, alarmed by this gentleman's cries, I ran to the spot, and found them all three in the water together. What happened after that, God only knows, for I swooned clean away. When the men-servants hastened to my assistance, they dragged this gentleman out of the lake, almost drowned."

"Enough, enough!" said the marquis; "say no more. Fresh horses, for Plumpton. Needham," said he to his attendant; "remain, and settle all accounts here, and follow me to-night, to Ferrybridge. Farewell, Mr. Blount," said he, turning to me. "Once more, I thank you for your exertions in favour of this poor child. Pardon me, however, for expressing the wish that we had never met, and the still further hope that we may never meet again. That my conduct may not appear tinged with eccentricity in saying this, I can but in justice to yourself put these letters in your hand. Being anonymous, I should not have noticed them, but for this catastrophe, which, to say truth, gives some slight colour to their contents. I have, however, myself more to blame than any other person. Farewell!"

So saying, the marquis left the room with his child; and proceeding to Plumpton, spent the day in superintending the process of dragging the lake for the body of his wife. His exertions, however, were not destined to be crowned with success; and, broken-hearted and disconsolate, he returned to his estate in the north, from whence he never again emerged, either to partake of the pleasures of a season at Harrowgate, or to enter into any other diversion whatever.

The anonymous letters he had received, were pointing at myself as entertaining dishonourable designs upon the marchioness; and desiring him, if he valued his honour, to return at once from Doncaster. They were signed merely with the feigned name of BACON.

Such, gentle reader, were the results of my first visit to the celebrated Dragon at Harrowgate. I cannot say altogether, however, the result, since I have to record other matters appertaining, which in their relation will show the degrees that helped the consummation of my fall in life.

It may easily be surmised that the little episode I have just narrated would give me a distaste for the amusements of this watering-place. It did so: and, indeed, threw a gloom over the assembled company at the Dragon to so great a degree, that three parts of them shortened their visit, packed up their travelling apparatus, and departed. I should have left the place myself, had it been in my power to do so: but it will be remembered that I was detached there on duty, and consequently had no choice. However, as I could not cut the place, I determined to remove my billet, and accordingly betook me to the inn at Lower Harrowgate, mostly inhabited

and resorted to by invalids who came there for the benefit of the waters.

High play, I have said, was constantly carried on at the Dragon, and during several visits there, I frequently spent whole days in watching the whist-players. Captain Catchflat, during our brief intercourse, had somewhat inoculated me with a love of gambling, which however, but for the accident at Plumpton, and its consequently rendering me unfitted for a time for out-door amusements, might never have ripened to maturity. Now, however, after watching the game, I insensibly found myself oftentimes compelled to cut in; and the vice once indulged in, again became a passion. Morning after morning, therefore, found me treading those delightful fields which lead from Low Harrowgate to the pleasant garden-entrance in rear of the Dragon, and night after night found me absorbed in the card-room, playing for stakes that would have been ruinous to a peer of the realm, if long unsuccessful.

My career among the gamblers at Harrowgate was short. The constant ill-luck which had so followed and made calamity of my life pursued me at the tables, with great malignancy; play at what I would, good cards fled my hands, and bank-notes my pockets. If, in cutting for partners, I gained Lady Merrimoth, the bank-notes disappeared from her lap, and the accustomed trumps and honours from her hand.—If, on the contrary, she was my opponent, the one was as sure to gladden her eyes, as the others were to accumulate to their usual height—her nose. What Cassio says of drink might almost be applied to gambling. “O thou invisible spirit of play, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee—devil.”

At first I did but seek the tables because the sounds of mirth and revelry were uncongenial to my state of mind. In fact, I had lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise, and sought a temporary oblivion from thought in endeavouring to interest myself by observing others engaged at high play. The very countenances of those I beheld absorbed in this all-powerful fascination, instead of appalling, at first amused me; till gradually drawn into the whirlpool, I was sucked in amongst the victims. My career, however, was short, as I said, and I arose one morning, after a day and night of hard play, not only completely cleared out, but loser of a large sum over and above what I could pay.

“Count Savinski,” I said, to the Pole I had been playing with, “I find myself now debtor to the tune of——”

“Yetz, sare,” said the Pole, “precisely dat. But it not mattare. Play on, pay to-morrow. Come, let’s have fretch cards. Sit down, monsieur, your turn now. Suppose *you* win a leetle dis next bout,—your game is to come now. *Ecarté, s’il vous plaît.*”

“Not so, count,” said I, “’tis of no avail, I have tried that

game too long. There is my I O U for the sum. I have it not about me, and must write for it."

So saying, I arose and drew up the blinds.

"By Gor, it is to-morrow," said the count. "If you no play more, I go to bed, that's all."

As there was no other flat to take a hand with the Pole, he retired to his apartment; whilst I, seizing pen, ink, and paper, commenced a letter to my father for a remittance to save my honour.

Before I had written three lines, however, deep shame stayed my pen. "No," said I, as I arose and walked the apartment, "I will not subject myself to a refusal.—I will not confess my frailty. Since I have thus made an ass of myself, at least I know how to suffer for my folly. There is, however, no occasion to make a second sensation in this hotel, by disturbing 'the curtained sleep' with the report of the pistol I make my quietus with—I can manage it otherwise. I must bid adieu to the hussars. My dear and much esteemed comrades I must part from, and cut the cavalry, for the flat-foots."

So saying, I resumed my pen, and addressing a letter to an army agent in town, requested him to procure me an exchange instantly, into a regiment in one of the most unhealthy of the West India Islands, naming the difference I required, and which would repay Savinski his infernal winnings in one last *sederunt*.

Exchanges at that time of day were easily effected. The army agent had but to turn over a few pages of his book, select the man suitable, write a letter or two, and the thing was done.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Ere the bat hath flown
His cloistered flight; ere, to black Hecate's summons,
The shard-borne beetle, with his drowsy hums,
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note."

SHAKSPERE.

WHILST this business was transacting, as it necessarily was known to my colonel, I received several letters of remonstrance at my intent to leave him, and also others equally gratifying from all my brother officers. Nay, Colonel Gauntlet, mounting his charger, galloped over from York to try and shake my purpose, and I beheld him, to my surprise, dismounting at the inn door, as I was dressing for the table-d'hôte.

"My dear Blount, what is all this?" said the fine old soldier, grasping my hand. "What in the devil's name induces you

to leave us?—You, the favourite of the regiment; by heavens, you've been the life of the corps since you joined. We cannot lose you. Is it that you dislike us, or does some matter of a private nature thus induce you to commit suicide by going to St. Kitts?"

"I'll be candid with you, colonel," said I; "there's no choice left me. Heaven knows how I love the —th, and all my brother officers. In losing yourself, colonel, I lose one I love, I almost fear, as well as I do my own father; for from you I have experienced the most generous and affectionate friendship since the hour I knew you. To say truth, I ought never to have joined the hussars, as I cannot afford it. This, therefore, has but anticipated our parting. In few, I have lost money here which I cannot pay, without assistance from my father. Not being on terms with my family, I have taken the only means in my power to extricate myself from the difficulty."

"Not the only means, my dear boy," said the colonel, "for had you written this to me, I dare say I could have assisted you. Come, name the sum, and if I can do so, I'll let you have it by to-morrow morning."

"Not for worlds, colonel," said I, "since I could never repay it again, I fear, unless I disposed of my commission. Heaven bless you for your offer! but cease to urge it."

"Perish the paltry sum!" cried the generous old soldier, "you never shall offer to repay it, unless you mean to insult me."

With tears in my eyes, I wrung his hand.

"Nay, then," said he, "if it be so, we must part with you. But you are wrong, young man, in being thus headstrong. Had I time I would write to your father myself upon the subject, and put you under arrest till I got his answer. But to-morrow's post you say will bring your letter with an advance from your agent."

"'Tis even so, my dear sir," said I, "and now let us order dinner in a private apartment, since I had rather enjoy your company, tête-à-tête, than dine with you at the table d'hôte."

We accordingly sat down, and took our bottle of claret together. After which, it being a lovely summer's evening, I ordered coffee early, and proposed a stroll.

"I must look at your detachment to-morrow," said the colonel, "and, as I suppose you will be glad to get away now as soon as possible, without waiting to see yourself gazetted out, I must send for Devereux to relieve you."

We strolled through the village of Low Harrowgate, and bent our steps towards the common. There had been a horse-race that evening upon the heath, and the evening sports were just then at high tide. Accordingly, we stopped amongst the throng to observe the diversions going on.

"Look! look! for heaven's sake!" he cried, "look at those braw wenches streaming across the common almost in a state

of nudity; nothing on them, as I'm a sinner, but their smocks."

"E'es, zur," said a bumpkin in the crowd, "that is a smock-race. Them wenches are entered to run in their smocks, and her as wins, wins a smock. You may see it there, yander a be hanging at t' winning-post. Yoiks! yoiks! off she goes! Dang my rags, but Mopsy is safe to win. Huzza! I'll bet a pint o' yale, to a dollop of fat bacon, Mopsy wins the shift."

"They must be marvellously out of linen, worse than Falstaff's regiment," said the colonel, "before they consent to go through such an ordeal. Let's go, and see the winner. Well done, Cutty Sark," he said, "by heaven, but you ran well, Mopsy, and so did you, Betsy, and you too, Maud, and Marian, Bridget, and Bess. You deserve a round dozen changes of linen. There's half-a-guinea amongst you. Egad, Blount, but she's a well-built filly, that Mopsy, clean upon her pasterns, strong jointed, and amazing good action."

"E'es, zur," said the bumpkin, "she's a brave wench, is Moll—a tightish craft. Don't e be chucking she under the chin, zur, she and I do keep company, we do."

"There, stand aside, for I be going to climb up this pole here for that leg of mutton o'top. Whoop, Robin. Now for first go."

Dire were the efforts of the Yorkists to swarm up the pole, which being well greased, as fast as one fellow attained nearly within arm's length of the mutton, the efforts at grasping it caused him to slide down, and another leaping upon his shoulders, struggled up, to share the same disappointment. Showers of sand and gravel, however, being at length thrown at the pole by the competitors, one lucky wight succeeded at length in achieving the task, and the leg of mutton, which, like the head of some traitor, had graced the top of the pole, and grinned defiance upon the mob, was in a few minutes torn to pieces and devoured.

Then came fellows to dip their heads in tubs of water for half-crowns, till they were half drowned, and subsequently diving in bags of flour to grope for shillings, till they were half choked. After that we had the gratification of witnessing a race after pigs with soaped tails, no catchee no havee. Then came a jingling match, in which some nineteen fellows (being blindfolded) were started to catch the twentieth, whose eyes were uncovered, with a sheep-bell tied between his legs. The rage and annoyance consequent upon the continual efforts of the blind to catch the fellow with the bell, which at last ended in a most amusing blind fight, greatly amused the colonel; at last, after seeing a match of jumping in sacks for a side of bacon, we wended our way onwards.

A beautiful belt of pines bounds this common to the eastward, and through them there are many pleasant walks.

Towards these plantations we took our way. The evening breeze was delightful after a somewhat hot and sultry day, and proceeding up one of the shadowy avenues, we beheld in the distance a couple of men advancing at a swift pace towards us.

The hum of the village revel, just distinguishable, sounded cheerily from the distant common, and the occasional shouts of laughter, mingled with the drums and trumpets of the different booths, caused the colonel frequently to stop and listen, as we sauntered onwards.

"Those mirthful sounds," said he, "from yonder Scotchified heath, remind me forcibly of Sir Walter's inimitable description of the Wappenshaw, in 'Old Mortality.' I thought so once or twice as I looked upon the scene; though I know not what Lady Margaret Bellenden would have thought of those slightly-clad wenches running a race for such a garment as the one we saw displayed on yonder pole. 'Tis a pity these country sports are fast fading away, even from our memories. The age, my dear sir, is getting too picked. We are refining away all the good old customs of our forefathers. But stay," said he, stopping short, "what companions have we here? Come forward, sirs," he called aloud to the two men I have mentioned, who, as he turned towards them instantly stopped, and appeared inclined to retrace their steps.

The colonel was a soldier of the old school. In all military matters he was an iron man; perhaps he erred in over-strictness. To those who were good soldiers, he was as gentle as zephyrs blowing beneath the violet. But to the malingerer he was a terrible scourge.

The colonel, looking like some templar of old, six feet two in height, a perfect cavalier in figure, his bushy grey moustache covering his mouth like a portcullis, and his white hair cropped close, halted, as his eagle eye fastened upon the two fellows the moment he turned and recognised them, and his shaggy eye-brows beetled, pent-house like, with an ominous frown.

"Come forward, sirs," said he, in a stern voice.

The men obeyed. As I looked at them, I saw that one was clad in dirty regimentals, whilst the other wore a smock frock, and carried a bundle at the end of a stout cudgel.

They moved quickly up, and endeavoured to pass. The soldier saluted, and the countryman would have done the same; but his comrade struck his arm down as he made the attempt.

"I thought so," said the colonel, fixing his eye upon the countryman, and putting out his hand and stopping the soldier. "Whither away so fast, my lads?"

They were both most ill-looking and truculent fellows, dogged and resolute in bearing, and they seemed half inclined I thought to rush past us.

"You're of the 105th, men," said the colonel, "and sta-

tioned at Leeds. What does that fellow masquerading here in countryman's attire?"

"I'm on a few days' leave," said the soldier; "this man's not in the army at all."

"'Tis false," said the colonel, sharply; "you're deserters both: show me your pass, sir."

The man looked like a demon; his eye flashed fire.

"My pass," he said; "yes, I can soon show you that."

"Do so," said the colonel, holding out his hand to receive it, as the fellow, putting his hand into the breast of his coat, suddenly drew forth a pistol, and shot him through the heart.

"There's my pass," he said; "b——t your interfering soul."

Almost petrified with horror, I caught the colonel as he staggered back; whilst the two deserters, leaping through the pines, escaped.

To give any correct idea of what I felt at this moment, is totally out of my power. Encumbered with the dead weight of the colonel's body in my arms, and covered with his life's-blood, I felt at the moment as if about to swoon myself, and it was some minutes before I was sufficiently collected to consider the best plan to pursue. In laying the body of the colonel upon the grass, I found that he was quite dead; and as soon as I ascertained that fact, I set off in pursuit of the murderers.

There is no necessity to pursue this part of the story; I willingly pass it over. Suffice it, they were taken, tried, and one of them executed. Meanwhile, I had followed the old soldier, together with my brother officers, to the grave: and over a braver and more worthy soldier, the volleying musketry never sounded a requiem.

This event, and the trial of the murderer and his comrade, necessarily detained me some time at York; and whilst yet staying with my comrades of the hussars, I received a letter from the adjutant-general, ordering me at the expiration of my present leave to join the depôt of the —th, at that time stationed at Fort George, in Inverness-shire. I had, therefore, I reflected, just time to run up to London, per mail, order my equipments for the infantry, and start for the north.

As, for a long time, I had heard nothing of my father or his welfare, I resolved to take the Grange in my way, (being now so near it,) in order to see how things were progressing there.

Some time ago, I had heard that my mother-in-law had favoured me with a little brother; and that the whole retinue had returned, and were at home. That, however, was now old news; and my indomitable pride would not allow of my holding communication with my father. Hitherto I had regularly received my allowance, and my time had been spent so delightfully with my comrades of the hussars, up to the period of my unfortunate visit to Harrowgate, that I had willingly endeavoured to forget home and all its disagreeables.

Could I have remained a short time longer in the hussars, I had every chance of my lieutenancy, as I had risen to the top of the list of cornets; but this unfortunate gambling transaction shook all my buds from blowing: and in my exchange, I necessarily went down to the bottom of the list of ensigns. However, youth is the season of hope; and as long as I was master of myself, "lord of my presence, and no land beside," I felt that I ought not to despond, even though hitherto unfortunate.

I felt convinced of the truth of the words of Caius Cassius:

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

And every day, as I reflected upon my past career, I felt convinced that my own want of forethought might have been the cause of the mishaps which had so inevitably followed, dogged the heels, and made shipwreck of all my doings. I set myself, therefore, down as a slight unweighing chap, without ballast, and infirm of purpose. I subjected myself to a sort of court of inquiry, and found myself convicted of so many trifling misdemeanours, that the whole amounted to a serious want of propriety of conduct, and steadiness of deportment. In fact I had dined at the mess of the —th hussars, for the last time; had been fêted, complimented, and regretted to the top of my bent; was tolerably overcome with grief, champagne, and excitement, and had got into a post-chaise at three o'clock in the morning, so as to steal away clandestinely, and avoid a repetition of leave-taking with my noble-hearted comrades in arms.

Thus was I once again cut adrift, and about to seek my fortune anew. It was a sort of retrograde movement I had made, as preferment surely awaited me in the hussars, where I was well beloved by the senior officers, and highly esteemed by the juniors. I know not whether it be the same in all cavalry regiments, but in the —th we were a perfect band of brothers. There were none of those petty jealousies, fears of rivalry, bickerings, backbitings, callings-out, and courts-martial, such as I have since seen. The regiment had been commanded by one who, in himself was like Prince Rupert, "*toujours soldat*," the perfection of high honour, chivalrous feelings, and devotion to the service. Stately and precise as the Knight of La Mancha, he had all his knightly feeling without a touch of his insanity. When you add to this, that the officers he commanded were, without exception gentlemen by birth and fortune, it may easily be conceived, that, in any exchange I was likely to make, I stood but little chance of bettering myself, least of all, by such exchange as I had just effected; since service in the sugar islands of the west, during piping times of peace, is so gene-

rally disliked by the profession, that it is as a matter of course avoided, if possible, amongst the gentlemen of the blade. However, I was now going to the reserve companies of the —th foot, had a few pounds in my pocket with which to carry on the war, and hoped for the best. I trusted to redeem my past errors, and rise in the profession. Once more, then, I sought my home, in order to humble myself before my father, ask his blessing, and then put on towards Scotland.

“ True, hope (said I), is swift, and flies with swallow’s wings,
Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures kings.”

As I repeated the lines of the aspiring Richmond, I fell asleep, till, “ first turn, horses out,” awoke me at the end of the stage.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ No ill luck stirring, but what lights o’ my shoulders,
No sighs but o’ my breathing, no tears but o’ my shedding.
Thou stick’st a dagger in me.—”

SHAKSPERE.

THE day had broke some hours, as I looked from the window of the chaise.

“ What place is this, boy ?” said I.

“ Wetherly, sir,” returned the postilion.

“ Don’t bring out the horses yet,” said I, “ I am undetermined whether or not I shall remain here all day. At any rate I shall stop here to breakfast.” Accordingly, I kicked open the door, and entered the inn.

Mine host ushered me into a comfortable room, with a cheerful fire blazing on the hearth. It was a chill morning, and ordering breakfast to be served immediately, I threw myself into a chair, and lighted a cigar. I quite agree with Washington Irving in his commendations of the comfort and independence of an apartment in an inn ; a man never, I think, enjoys a meal with greater zest than when, after the fatigue of a journey, he kicks off his boots, thrusts his feet into slippers, and seats himself before the fire of a snug little parlour of a road-side hostel. As I looked out of the window upon the well-kept little garden across the road, whilst I sipped a delicious cup of coffee and demolished the new laid eggs and buttered toast, served by the good-looking hostess, I thought that no man had a right to despond whilst he possessed the means of enjoying the comforts of which I then was partaking.

"Shall I bring in another muffin, sir?" said the assisting damsel, in accents so gentle and conciliatory, that I felt half inclined to thank her for the offer with a kiss.

"Anything, my pretty lass," said I, "shall be welcome that is brought me by the handsomest girl in Yorkshire. At the same time, I shall be more bounden to you, for the sight of an old newspaper to beguile the time."

Capriciously did she bend her head on one side, and dance up insidiously, as she returned with a plate of reeking muffins in one hand, and a newspaper in the other.

The girl was extremely handsome, with cheeks like a rose, and the figure of a nymph. I felt I should be totally wanting in proper feeling not to offer her a salute. I might even have given her two, but in glancing at the paper she thrust almost at me as she escaped, I saw that which, handsome as she was, completely banished her from my thoughts. The paragraph which fixed my instant attention in the *York Herald*, was sufficiently interesting: it was headed, in large letters, thus:—"Conflagration, for the sixth time, of Wharnccliffe Grange, and total destruction of the building."

Like the poet Otway, who, it was affirmed, fell a victim to an eleemosynary penny roll, which stuck fast in his epiglottis, I was almost choked with the portion of buttered muffin I had between my teeth the instant before I had read this startling intelligence.

Whilst I stood glaring upon the paper, and reading the account of the catastrophe without comprehending (in my eagerness to gather it all at once) one half that was given, mine host entered the apartment with a countenance of wrath.

"I ax pardon, zur, (he said) but you'll excuse I, if I tell'e I won't stand no nonsense to our Cis. She be a good and war-tuous lass, zur, and ain't used to be tumbled and touzled in yonder fashion. You'll excuse I; but you've made a mistake here, I'm jealous. This be the Harewood Arms, and if you've come into it, thinking I keep a disrespectable house, you're considerably out, that's all. Cicely is my niece, zur, and if so be as you're agoing to stay in this house, I'll thank'e to treat her as sitch."

"Landlord," I said, disregarding his anger, "have you a swift horse in your stable?"

"A what, zur, a good horse? Did you ever know a Yorkshire farmer wi'out a good nag?"

"I see here an account of Wharnccliffe Grange being burnt to the ground. Your paper gives few of the particulars of the catastrophe. Do you know anything about it?"

"Ay, it be old news, that," said the landlord. "It have taken fire five or six times. First, the rick-yard was burned; then the out-houses: next night, one wing of the house was discovered to be on fire, and when that was put out before

daybreak, t'other side broke out before nightfall. It is supposed to be the act of an incendiary. They've had constables there for the last week: and yet, as t'paper there tells us, it's broke out again, and burnt to the ground."

"It is my father's residence, landlord," said I. "I see, by this paper, that no lives have been lost. Nevertheless, I should like to reach the spot as quickly as possible. As I know this part of the country well, if you will get me a fleet horse, I will cross the country, and reach the Grange in an hour. Forgive the kiss I gave to Cicely, landlord, and help me to a nag for the love of heaven."

"You shall have my own oss," said the host. "I be sorry now I scolded 'e. Here, hostler, bring out the little lass. My certie, but she'll carry you well. So you be young Master Blount," he continued, "be ye? Lord safe us! but I'm sorry for yer misfortin. There's t' oss a coming round. Don't spur her, zur. Fire's a dreadful infliction. Good bye, zur. I wish you merry."

"There's for your bill, landlord," said I, as I jumped on his steed. "Send on my baggage by the coach to Abbots Wickford. The Grange burnt down!" said I, as I buried my spurs in my horse's sides. "I am amazed, methinks, and lose my way amidst the thorns and dangers of this world." Having, in former days, often crossed that part of the country, after the fox, I made for my sometime home by the shortest cuts, and at full speed.

Clearing the deer-palings at Berrywell Chace, in a few minutes more I dashed through the belt of plantations, and presently drew bridle before the well-known, beloved old moat.

The account I had heard was but too correct. The mansion was a heap of smouldering ruins. A sort of falling scaffolding of blackened rafters, smoking galleries, and still burning stair-cases, hung from every part of the calcined walls of the time-honoured Grange.

The devouring element had done its worst, and the moat, now alas! but a rushy ditch, was in many places half filled with the rubbish of the fortress it had once washed with its protecting water. Some firemen and labourers were still keeping up a discharge of muddy water upon the mass of burnt material as I rode up to inquire about the family, and their place of refuge. I found that they were luckily absent at the time of the conflagration; and as I saw no person I knew amongst the throng, I thought it best to seek old Martha the housekeeper at her cottage without the park walls.

I found her as I expected, with spectacles on nose, and bible in her lap, seated before her door. She looked over her glasses as I pulled up before her, but her eyes were too dim now to recognise me at the moment.

"Any more ill news?" said she, snappishly. "Methinks

there is nothing now to add to the catalogue. The old mansion is in a heap of ruins; the estate is sold, they tell me; the master an outlaw, and the son an alien from his father's heart. What seek you, sir," she continued, "of one who has outlived all her hopes and fears? If you have aught to tell me of my child—my young master, it shall be welcome. If not, pass on, and trouble me not."

"He comes to tell you of his own welfare, Martha," said I, dismounting. "Your old favourite stands before you."

The old dame threw her bible somewhat irreverently upon the turf before her, as she started up, and locked me in her arms. The next minute my horse was tied to the little gate, and I was seated in her humble cottage. The careful creature closed and bolted her door, before she would seat herself beside me, and answer the questions I poured upon her ear.

"Ah, it's a bad world, sir," said she, as soon as she had informed me that my father was again abroad with his wife and some of her family, living at a château he had purchased, about twenty miles from Caen, "it's a bad world, sir. There're queer stories about this fire. I suppose you know young Levison has been at the Grange the whole time during these repeated conflagrations. It's never been whispered, nor have I ever breathed such a thing; but if it has not been done by his hand, it must have been the work of the evil one."

"I thought that constables had been on the watch, night after night, both within and without the building," said I.

"And so they have; himself having the ordering of their stay there; and himself sitting up to watch, too; and himself the foremost at patrolling the grounds, taking all sorts of precautions, and swearing that it must be done by some inmate of the house, or the flames could never so mysteriously and continually burst out in so many of the locked-up apartments; ay, and himself the demon, all the while, that laid combustible and set the match. Nay, I wouldn't hesitate to swear that it was that incarnate devil who has done the mischief, even before the whole world."

"'Twere best not, Margaret," said I. "There's no proof, it seems."

"No, so I find," returned the old dame. "More's the pity."

"And where is he now?"

"Started for France, to carry the clatter, the fiend! He's like the genius of mischief and rapine, an evil and malignant demon."

"What could be his motive, Martha?"

"Ill-will to you, I'll be sworn. He heard, I'm told, that you were greatly beloved and well thought of in the regiment you were in, and he wished to spite you in your tenderest part. He knew you loved the old mansion with a devoted affection."

Badly as I thought of my enemy, I could hardly conceive

him so malignant as the faithful old servant made him out. It was useless to dwell upon the subject, and I willingly turned my inquiries upon a more interesting subject, the owners of Marston Hall. Although I had kept up a correspondence with Mistress Sweetapple occasionally since I had left my father's roof, still I had much to learn, I found.

"Miss Villeroy," said I, "Martha, have you any news to give me of her or her relatives?"

"None that will much please you," she replied. "That party has been on the continent, almost ever since you left London. They have now returned to this neighbourhood; and report says, that your old antagonist, Lord Hardenbrass, is speedily to marry Miss Villeroy, if they be not already married."

Notwithstanding all the efforts I had made to school myself, and try to forget that lovely creature, a pang, sharp as the stiletto of the Portuguese, shot through my heart at the words.

"The fiery trigon hath recovered completely from his wounds," said I, "has he? Well, happiness be theirs! And the Lady Constance, what of her? Is she married, too, Martha?"

"No," returned the old dame, "I can answer for it, she is not. Her whole care and attention has been given to her father, the duke, who has never recovered the dreadful wound he received in London, in that duel with the Lord Cœur de Lion. I understand he is in a miserable state of health, even now; and never very likely to be much better."

I felt shocked to hear this; and reproached myself with the taunt I had thrown out against Lady de Clifford.

"Excellent creature!" said I; "how much I honour that paragon of women. For fineness of disposition, nobleness of mind, worth, high honour, and beauty, Martha, that lady towers upon a monument, high as the clouds, above her fellow-creatures."

"She certainly is an excellent lady," returned Martha; "with the brow of a queen, and the gentleness of a child. I saw her but a week ago."

"Saw her! Who, Martha?"

"Lady Constance de Clifford. She has been here more than once since they returned."

"Here? Lady Constance here? what, in this cottage?" said I, surprised.

"Yes," returned Martha; "and sitting in that chair you now sit on."

"For what did she come hither, Margaret," said I.

"Ostensibly to inquire after *me*—in sober sadness to inquire about *you*. I was ill, and confined to my bed; Mistress Jampote, the housekeeper at Marston Hall, who knows me, heard of it, and told the Lady Constance. A few days after—

wards I was visited on my sick couch by the doctor, from Abbots Wickford, and the next day the Lady Constance, in her riding-habit, was standing beside my couch when I awoke, after a refreshing sleep, the effects of the doctor's drugs."

"Beautiful creature!"

"Since that," continued Martha; "she rode over twice a-week, to inquire after me; and you may be pretty sure we spoke of you often. Nay, it's all very well, but you won't easily persuade me that a young and lovely creature like that would come twice a-week, so many miles, merely to inquire after an old bed-ridden housekeeper, without there was some interesting news she wished to learn from her."

"How long did you say it was since she last was here?" I inquired.

"A month," said Martha. "She never came after that unlucky accident she heard of."

"What accident? in heaven's name."

"Why, the Marchioness of Richborough's being drowned in the lake, at Plumpton."

"The devil!" said I. "How came she to hear the particulars of that affair, Margaret?"

"Naturally enough," she replied. "The marquis is her relation; she couldn't help but hear all about it; most likely from himself."

"Martha," said I, rising, "I find the room rather warm. For the present, I shall leave you, and take my horse to the village, where I intend to sleep. To-morrow early I shall visit you again before I leave, as I have much to say to you. For the present, then, farewell."

"Farewell, my dear child," she said. "Child, indeed! what a man you have become; six feet one, if you're an inch. And how dark and curly your hair is grown; and how handsome you are! Well, I always said you were the picture of Sir Herbert, and now you are liker than ever. Ah, my dear young master, I fear me your father is playing a hard-hearted game by you. I have every reason to believe he has totally disinherited my poor boy, now this stranger has come into the world."

"I should not care, Martha," said I, "though he cut me off with a shilling, so he did not utterly cast me off from his affections."

"Alas! alas! 'evil communications corrupt good manners,' as the copy-book says; and those he is now led by and connected with, totally pervert his mind. I suppose you have heard that all the pictures, plate, and valuables have been packed up and sent off to furnish up this Château Rousillon he has taken?"

"I neither know nor care, Martha," said I. "It is enough that my father thinks me unworthy to share his affections or his councils;—that, without fault on my part, he has almost spurned me from his hearth, and degraded me as far as he

could in the eyes of the world. That I have faults, I acknowledge—that I am headstrong, rash, fiery in temper, and inconsiderate, with a thousand faults besides, I am ready to acknowledge; but that I am, as he would have the world believe, vicious, evil in disposition, profligate, and altogether a fool, that I deny. Farewell, Martha,” said I. “‘Evil or good report,’ as the poet says, ‘we soon live down, if undeserved. It was truly unfortunate, indeed, I could not remain in the —th, for there I found myself in a situation which might have led on to fortune. Well, be it so, good Martha; adieu, for the present. To-morrow, I shall visit and take leave of you before I start.”

It was not my intent to ride straight to the village, although I told old Martha so, in order that I might spend some time in wandering about the neighbourhood I loved so well. I therefore bent my steps to the now devastated Grange; and dismounting, gave my horse to a man I found amongst the labourers and firemen, with directions to take him to the village, and order me supper and a bed at the little inn. “For the last time, perhaps, in my life I will spend a few hours,” thought I, “amongst the scenes of my youth. And if, as Martha says, I am disinherited by my sire, I will never again return hither.”

CHAPTER XXVII.

“I should have wearied of this fellow’s company, had I not been still more tired of my own thoughts.”

“His breath is as dangerous as the breath of a demi-culverin.”

SCOTT.

A DAY or two from this period found me in the great metropolis, lounging in the great street of that town of towns, and making my way to the great artist in military habiliments, Mr. Jones, of Regent-street, in order to consult with him upon the necessary equipments for my new regiment, the 145th. Upon introducing myself, and making my wants known, he quickly took upon himself the ordering of my habiliments.

“There is a gentleman at the other end of the shop, sir,” said he, “belonging to the 145th, Lieutenant Bullyman, just at this moment trying on a regimental coat.”

On turning, I instantly recognised the youth who had been my fellow-passenger to Cork, and who had professed himself an advocate for the custom of fighting a duel upon first joining a corps, as a necessary *début*. I therefore made no scruple of stepping up and accosting him, as I wished to learn something of the regiment, and the part of the world I was bound

for. He remembered me instantly, and soon enlightened me upon the subject, as far as he was able.

"Fort George," said he. "Oh, it's a d——d hole of a place. Every day there, sir, is a month. Added to which, there are so many detachments still-hunting, that it's a case of solitary confinement altogether. There are some temporary barracks up in the mountains; and one never sees the depôt for months at a time. For my part, I shall try and get out to the service companies; for it's the devil to be snowed up in a Highland castle for six months at a time, where you can hardly get food to eat, and are as miserable as if an exile in Siberia."

I felt pleased at the thought of so romantic a situation, and determined to volunteer for one of those Siberian detachments the moment I got there. As Lieutenant Bullyman, who had been on leave for two months, was like myself on the eve of starting for Fort George, we agreed to go together, and commenced an intimacy forthwith. We dined, therefore, together that day, went to Covent Garden Theatre that night, and the next night, after ordering our regimentals to be forwarded without delay, started, per mail, for the north.

Scotland had always been fairy-land to me. The perusal of Guy Mannering would of itself have made me anxious to visit it; and the scenes described in Rob Roy had rendered the Highlands so peculiarly interesting, that I looked upon each pine forest, rocky glen, river and heath, with the devotion of a Highlander. I was going there, too, under tolerably pleasing circumstances; not as an idle tourist to visit Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond, but as a soldier on duty. And doubtless, I thought, I shall meet with as many adventures when on the mountains, hunting after the whiskey brewers—those hardy Highlanders—as Francis Osbaldiston did at the clachan of Aberfoil.

"Pah!" said my companion, "what a mistake! You'll find the highlands a bore, Fort George a bastille, the country altogether overrated, and the inhabitants a race of Esquimaux. Why, sir, if you ask a lady to dance at a ball, she'll answer you in an unknown tongue. 'Fats yer wull,' was all I could get out of the mouth of the last lady with whom I danced at Inverness—the day after we marched to Fort George. There were Buttenshaw, Pattypan, L'Estrange, and O'Grady, all five of us got the same answer from our partners that night. 'Fats yer wull,' and 'Dinna ken,' was all we could elicit. For a taste," continued my companion.—"Which, madam," said I, by way of commencing an interesting conversation: "which do you think looks best on parade, the bear skin or the chaco?"

"'Fats yer wull,' said the lady.

"'I beg pardon,' said I: 'but will you favour me by translating that pretty *patois*. I don't understand 'Fats yer wool?' Is it Gaelic or high-Dutch?"

"'I dinna ken,' returned the damsel.

"And there the conversation dropped for five minutes. However, as the lass was really extremely handsome, I determined to draw her out, if possible."

"'Pray, madam,' said I, 'what is your private opinion on the subject of wings and epaulettes? The wings, as you see, are the ornamentals upon the shoulders of the light bobs and grannies. The epaulettes are the decorations pertaining to the battalion officers. The gentleman next you wears a wing. This extremely handsome swab upon my shoulder is an epaulette; which do you consider the most becoming of the two?'"

"'Fats yer wull,' returned the lass, with the prettiest expression in the world."

"'Which, I'm asking, madam, do you altogether prefer?'"

"'I dinna ken,' she said, with a malicious glance at her friend opposite, and there the conversation dropped. There, sir, think of that for an intellectual treat."

"I have always heard," I said, "that the better classes in Scotland are no whit behind their English neighbours in conversational powers. De Mowbray, of the hussars, who is a Highlander, has given me several letters of introduction to the different families around; but if I'm to be saluted with tones so unmusical to English ears, as 'Fats yer wull,' and 'Dinna ken,' I think I shall put them in the fire. Where was this assembly held at which you met those fair nymphs with the discordant voices?"

"It was not at an assembly, man, at all," said Lieutenant Bullyman, "it was at a Highland meeting."

"A Highland meeting! Oh! that accounts for it. What, a sort of gathering, when only the peasantry meet together?"

"It's all we have seen of Scotch society as yet, however," returned Bullyman; "for, unluckily, not one of our officers have any acquaintance in the north."

"Well, I shall look up my introductions," I said, "and deliver them faithfully. My friend, Mowbray, speaks rapturously of the style of life amongst the gentry in the north, and the assemblies, he says, are delightful."

"Well, well," said Bullyman, "we shall see what your introductions do for us."

In this sort of conversation we passed the borders, wound our way amongst the "Cheviot mountains lone," and reached Edinburgh, where we halted for a night's rest, and crossed the Frith of Forth the next morning.

It was four o'clock, pitch dark, cold and dismal, as we crossed the Forth: so that we saw little of Sir Walter's "own romantic town."

"There," said Bullyman, when we landed, "we're in the kingdom of Fife; and a precious fine, barren-looking, inhospitable spot it is. I dare swear now, you would be for looking after Macduff's castle, where his wife, his bairns, and all the innocent souls that traced his line, were put to the sword."

"I would we had time enough," said I, "and I certainly should do so. This is Fifeshire, is it? How many romantic and delightful associations does it call to mind."

"You'd much better call to mind your baggage in the boat; for I see at least a score of those brawny Scotch porters have taken a grip of some one or two of the packages. There's one fellow, with the brawn of Hercules, has loaded himself with a hat-box of mine, containing a six-and-ninepenny gossamer, and is making as much of getting it ashore, as if it were a seaman's chest."

We now traversed over the kingdom of Fife, and crossing the Frith of Tay, reached Aberdeen that night. From thence we took the night-coach, and arriving next morning at the little hamlet of Campbeltown, bent our steps across the heath to Fort George.

Fort George is a dark, sombre-looking pile. On one side the wild waters dash, and on the other a blasted heath, barren enough to be identified with the very place where Macbeth encountered the witches, meets the eye. As my companion had described it, a more dull and melancholy-looking place for troops to be quartered in was not, I should think, to be met with in Great Britain.

It was a perfect town withinside the walls; but it seemed an uninhabited town, for not a soul was to be seen, except the sentinels within the gates.

Just as we entered, however, the bugle sounded the assembly, and the depôt of the 145th were beginning to turn out for parade. We stopped, therefore, in the dull, dark-looking square to observe them. Altogether the appearance of the place reminded me of the description in "Ivanhoe," of the Preceptory of Templestow. The morning was cold and comfortless, a driving sleet blew in our faces, and the buildings had a melancholy and half habitable look: whilst ever and anon the armed heel of some field officer, or depôt adjutant, clanked upon the pavement, as he passed from one door to another of the officers' quarters. Presently the brass drum, rattling and reverberating, was re-echoed from the walls around, whilst the trumpets, fifes, cymbals, and bagpipes flourished out their inspiring notes. The companies wheeled into column, and the depôt marched past in review order.

My companion now offered his services as guide, and ushering me into the mess-room, introduced me to several officers who were there assembled. It happened that at this time there was a pretty large muster of officers, from various other regiments and depôts quartered in Scotland, on occasion of a general court-martial having the day before assembled, and as there were also the depôts of two other regiments at that time in the fort, there was a good-sized party in the room.

After the parade was over, I was also formally introduced to my brother officers of the 145th, and reported myself arrived

safe and sound to the then commanding officer of the *dépôt*, Major Clavering. I was received by them with great kindness, and the circumstance of my having exchanged from the hussars was rather a favourable feature in my case; the officers serving in a regiment stationed in the West Indies being generally men whose poverty, more than will, consents to such unhealthy service.

I thought, however, I observed a sort of coolness towards my friend Bullyman, which I could not completely comprehend, and which I set down to his style being rather too rodomontade and overbearing. He was evidently a boaster and a disputatious personage, loud and dictatorial in conversation, very much inclined to dispute upon every topic which arose in conversation, and sometimes so rude and abrupt in manner as to make a disagreeable stop in the harmony of the assembled party.

He rather hung to my skirts I observed, and wished to have it supposed, by his manner, that we had been friends of old. Making himself, therefore, as agreeable as his nature permitted, he introduced me into my barrack-room, and performed for me all those little attentions most grateful to a stranger and a new comer.

"A pleasant view that," he observed, seeing my eyes wander over the main of waters.

"Delightful," said I.

"How d'y'e mean by that," said he, "*delightful*—I think it *damnable*, disgusting, and disagreeable. Fancy being lodged in this sea-built tower, and condemned to watch the monotonous waters of this infernal coast for a whole year together; and that to a man of my kidney. One who *has seen* society, and mingled with the world, lived in the eye of fashion from infancy. Oh, it's monstrous! London, sir, is my world: I am wretched in this situation. Think of this dreary inhospitable view, and the bustle and gaiety of Regent-street at this hour of the day."

"I rather prefer this," said I, "of the two. Perhaps I shall tire of it; but at present the view of the ocean from your window, now that the sun gilds the waves, 'those curly headed monsters,' is delightful. What made you join the army? for I fear you'll find it, with your ideas and tastes, rather a succession of banishments."

"I fancy I shall, from what I have already seen," said he. "I came to the place from Spike Island in Ireland."

"What place is that?" I inquired, laughing.

"Spare me the description," said he, bitterly, "I cannot liken it, I never saw the like. 'Tis the curse of service, sir. We are sent to waste life in places, which (but for this red rag we're decked out in, and this trinket we wear by our sides, and which somehow reconcile the children of vanity to all the hardships the trade is heir to) it would break the spirit of a hermit to be

"My dear sir," said I, "you have mistaken your profession. Why do you follow the trade of arms, or why have you not rather chosen some profession in which you might have passed your time amidst the bustle of life in London?"

"What! be an inspector of filth—a doctor, or wear out my youth chained to the desk of a merchant's counting-house; or defeat my favour with a wig and gown, and become some Temple-haunting briefless barrister—some *nisi prius* scarecrow! No, that would never do for my complaint."

"Well, what then would you like?" said I.

"Ten thousand a year and a park—that's what I like. Curse the service; I detest and abominate it."

"Then why not sell out, and retire to your park, and the ease and enjoyment of the ten thousand superfluities and luxuries purchasable by your ten thousand a year?"

"My dear sir," he returned, with a sigh, "I'm a younger son. I haven't ten thousand shillings a year, besides my pay; or think ye I'd be here?"

"Then," said I, "it strikes me, since you seem to have no choice in the matter, having made your election, and joined the service, the best way would be to make yourself as happy as you can."

"I suppose so," said the lieutenant, drily. "However, I confess to you that I might have been more content if I had joined any other corps but this. I don't like the gallant 145th—they're a queer set of fellows."

"They appear to me a very gentlemanly set of fellows," I replied.

"No doubt, on a two hours' acquaintanceship, you think so," he rejoined. "So did I till I found them out. For instance, there's Roland Robert Fetlock; that is a colt, indeed, for he can talk of nothing but his horse. He's one of the bores of the mess-table, and he goes by the name of the groom. I gave him that name; and if he had not been a coward as well as a base groom, he'd have called me out for it. You'll be bored to death with the merits of that Squire Richard's stud, if you give him your company, I promise you. Fancy a man of eight thousand a year, and whose passion is horses, serving in a regiment in the West Indies—*ergo*, he's fool as well as jockey. Then there's Captain Euclid, a narrow-minded pedant, very fit to display his deep reading, and wrangle away his life at Oxford or Cambridge, amongst other black-letter double asses as disputative as himself, but no more calculated for the society of army men than I am for those of the cloister. He'll interrupt Fetlock's description of how his horse performed in a hurdle race, to lecture upon the superior style in which Bucephalus carried Alexander, or to assert the superiority of the Spartan horsemanship over that of the knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Then comes that water-fly, Bellarmine, the most insensate ass that ever was enfolded in regimentals: a

selfish, miserable, empty coxcomb; a regular libel upon manhood."

"My dear sir," said I, "I must not sit to hear this. Come, it is time that we prepared for the mess."

"Nay, hear me dilate upon the virtues of our commandant," he said; "let me put you in possession of his capabilities as a soldier, and I will spare you the remainder."

"Not a sentence," I said; "I should hold myself a sort of receiver of scandal, if I heard more."

"Well, *n'importe*," said he, "you'll find what I have uttered is the truth, at any rate."

Soon after this conversation, the drums sounding out the "roast beef of old England," we joined the mess-table, where altogether a large party were assembled. Here again I thought I observed, that amongst the officers of his own corps, my friend Lieutenant Bullyman seemed to be by no means a favourite. He was not exactly cut, but there was a reserve on their part towards him and a sort of endurance of his conversation, when addressed to any of the 145th, which showed me he had in some way made himself on ill terms with the whole dépôt. Accordingly, he retaliated upon them by a contemptuous and rather rude bearing, which ever and anon met with a sharp rebuff; and the personalities he indulged in, were met by those to whom he addressed them by reproofs, which for the time generally discomfited him, and sent him to another party. Meanwhile, the dinner being over, and the mirth growing fast and furious, bumper after bumper was swallowed, and the table was quickly in a roar.

"Squire Richard," cried Lieutenant Bullyman, "you're going the pace, I see; come, I'll take you a bet you don't gallop up a hill perpendicular, and with a pistol, shoot a sparrow flying."

"I never boasted of my skill in the pistol," said Fetlock, "though I cannot say as much for others. You're a good shot, I think you told us so; can you hit Wat Tyler's mark?"

"Not he," said Bellarmine, "he doesn't relish a target that fires again. Best not spur the horse too sharply, Bullyman, he may fling up and send you into a ditch."

"Better be struck by the hoofs of the horse, than the heels of the ass," said Bullyman. "I didn't address myself to you."

"If you allude to the ass in the lion's skin, I grant you," returned the dandy.

"No more of that," said the commanding officer; "a song, a song—Captain Plume is going to favour us with the 'British Grenadiers.'"

It was easier to call for a song, than gain a hearing, where every man talked, and few listened. Amongst the loudest of the speakers was Captain Euclid, who had got upon his favourite theme, the ancients. Accordingly, my new friend soon proceeded to draw him out, as he called it, and involve himself in fresh difficulties.

"I maintain an opinion opposite to that," he said, in answer to some observation he had heard him utter: "I hold fast to the Macedonian phalanx; a fig for your short-sworded soldiery of the seven-hilled city. I'm for long spears and solid squares, albeit I've no objection to the wedge formation either."

"You're clean wrong then, sir," said the captain, taking the bait. "The Greeks and Macedonians were in error, with their sixteen ranks of long pikes, wedged in close array. Reflection, as well as the event, prove that the massive phalanx, strong as it was, was unable to contend against the activity of the Roman legion. The legion was only eight deep."

"Ten, sir, ten, I've been told," said Bullyman.

"Eight, only eight; every school-boy kens that," returned Euclid; "and three feet between files, and three feet between ranks; consequently they had free space for the use of their arms and motions. Yes, sir, it was the short sword, and this formation, that conquered the world."

"Ha, ha!" said Bullyman; "with the musket and bayonet in the hands of the 145th, I wouldn't care a pin for their formation and weapons, even though you led 'em on,—not a pin."

"A pin, said ye," returned the pedant, "peradventure, a pin may be a more important instrument than you imagine. A pin has a head, sir, and that's more than some folks I know are possessed of; but as regards the phalanx——"

"No, no," shouted Bullyman, "the pin, the pin. Prove the importance of the pin, and I give up the phalanx to the devil who invented it."

"The pin," said the captain, contemptuously, "my dear sir, however you may despise it, requires in its manufacture, the hands of at least a dozen men; quite, I should say, as intellectual, though, peradventure, not quite so conceited as your worthy self. 'Cornet my dear.'"

"I'm not going to dispute it," returned the lieutenant, winking at me, as much as to say, now we shall have it. "Go on."

"The pin," continued the captain, "in its manufacture, will instance the division of labour better than any article I can just now think of, and the fair Belinda at her toilette perhaps, as she repaired her smiles, little thought when she selected the bright particular pin which confined her bodice, the number of hands that minikin had necessarily passed through in its formation. Ahem! Yes, sir. One man draws out the wire, another is employed to straighten it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head. To make that head, sir, requires two or three distinct operations, to put it on is another man's business, to whiten the pin is another's, and it is even a trade of itself to put them into paper."

The captain's description had so interested and amused the whole table, that it was with difficulty several near him could

restrain themselves from bursting into laughter. However, he was so absorbed in his own conceit, that with his eyes raised and his head thrown back, he continued to dilate upon the subject, till he had completely given the history of the trade.

"Pin-making being thus divided into distinct operations, gentlemen," continued he, "even a small manufactory, composed of but ten persons, can easily produce fifty thousand pins in a day—think of that; each person, therefore, sir, can bring to perfection four thousand eight hundred pins daily. Think of that, gentlemen,—and remember also, if you please, that had they wrought independently, the best man among them could not have made twenty.—This most important young gentleman, here, although he evidently despises the instrument, could not even have manufactured one pin in a month, to save his soul—ahem!"

"I thank my stars, therefore," said Bullyman, "and I hold him base, common, and mechanical, who could so give up his time, as even to have learned by rote the process of making a pin. Ha, ha! fancy, only fancy, gentlemen, the circumstance of our learned and worthy friend, Captain Euclid; the erudite and accomplished author of the 'Life of Quintus Metellus Celer, proconsul of the Gauls,' condescending to inquire into the component parts of a minikin pin. Ha, ha, ha! bravo."

"Laugh at yourself, Bullyman, my dear," said the captain, growing angry. "I'll assure you, you'll find the subject inexhaustible, ye're a puir, weakly, shallow mortal, cornet, with no more brains than are to be found in a mallet."

"Perhaps not, in the estimation of a narrow-minded pedant," returned Bullyman. "I don't allow you to be judge of a man's capacity for anything but the manufacture of pins. Ha, ha! God help thee, Euclid, for thou art a great fool."

The Highlander's answer to this was in deed, not word. He leant across the table, and with his face glowing with rage, emptied his glass of claret into the countenance of Lieutenant Bullyman.

Except by those immediately near where we were seated, and who had been listening to the controversy, and enjoying it, the party had not seen this transaction, and it effectually silenced all who had witnessed it.

The irate Scot, having thus vented his anger, arose from his seat, and deliberately taking his foraging cap from the peg on which he had hung it, walked out of the mess-room; whilst Lieutenant Bullyman was so taken by surprise at the consummation he had provoked, that he appeared completely dumb-founded. He hadn't even energy to wipe from his beard the libation Captain Euclid had conferred upon it; but sat with stupid dismay eyeing his opponent till he left the room.

"Had you not better retire?" said I to Lieutenant Bullyman, who was sitting leaning back in his chair, his chin upon his chest, and his eyes fixed upon the mahogany before him.

"Do you advise it?" inquired he.

"I hardly know how to advise in such a case," said I, "but I think you had better do so."

"Will you come with me," said he.

"I'll follow you in a few minutes," replied I, "if you wish me to be your friend."

"For God's sake, do so," said he, rising and retiring; "come quickly."

The senior officer of the 145th, Major Clavering, who had been engaged in conversation with the friend next him, had not seen, or been made acquainted with this little fracas. He, therefore, rallied the guests, pushed the bottle about, and the conversation once more becoming general, I arose, left the room, and sought Bullyman's quarters.

I found that gentleman in bed, to my no slight astonishment, and upon my inquiring as to the meaning of such an early retirement, he informed me that he had sent for the surgeon of the regiment, as he meant to put himself in the sick report.

"Report yourself sick!" said I, in astonishment, "and at such a time as this. Then, what do you mean to do about Captain Euclid?"

"What do you advise?" said he.

"You surely don't want advice," I replied. "You cannot help yourself. You must call him out instantly. Did you not ask me to be your friend?"

"I've thought better of it," said he, turning and rolling himself in the coverlid; "I shall do no such thing. I shall report him to the commanding officer for ungentlemanly conduct at the mess-table."

"And this is your firm determination?" said I.

"It is," returned he.

"Then I wish you good night, Lieutenant Bullyman, and pleasant dreams," returned I. "Here comes the doctor."

Leaving my new friend, I sought my barrack-room, and tired with my journey, retired to bed.

It was evident to me now, why my friend the lieutenant was on ill terms with his brother officers. He was evidently a bully and a coward; had got himself into several scrapes before this untoward event, and failing in doing the thing that was right, was slightly regarded accordingly. This last affair, however, was a more serious scrape than he had yet thrust himself into, and strange to say, he had not courage sufficient to meet the man whose insult he had provoked.

Meanwhile, the colonel was made acquainted with the circumstance, by the person who ought to have been most careful in concealing it, himself. The captain, therefore, finding that my new friend failed in calling him out, (being impatient of action,) proceeded to call the lieutenant out for the insult he had given him, before he himself baptized him

with the claret. The lieutenant refusing to come when called upon, the whole affair became a matter of inquiry, and created quite a sensation in the corps.

Major Clavering, our commandant, was a gallant and chivalrous soldier, and one who had sought the bubble reputation, more than once, "in the imminent deadly breach;" a sort of fellow who would volunteer for a storming party as readily and carelessly as he would for a steeple-chase; but he was quite unequal to the command, even of the depôt of a regiment. He couldn't move an inch without his adjutant. His ambition was to have a fashionable regiment, and he especially liked those quarters in time of peace where he could patronize the ball, the play, and the mess dinner-party. He was, indeed, a gay and gallant fellow, as jealous of the smallest deviation in dress among his officers on parade, or in the assembly-room, as he would have been of their address in the field. The circumstance, therefore, of one of his corps being known to have provoked and received an insult without resenting it, was gall and wormwood to him. Being of a kind disposition, he wished to avoid courts-martial as much as possible; and after giving the lieutenant one or two opportunities and hints to settle matters with Captain Euclid, by the arbitration of the pistol, he signified to him, that it would be advisable to exchange into another regiment, or altogether sell out of the 145th.

The lieutenant accepted the former alternative, and promised to negotiate an exchange as soon as possible. Meanwhile he was completely cut by the corps, and during the time he waited for an answer to the application for leave of absence, being relieved from duty, stalked about like a miserable degraded outcast, who had committed some crime which placed him without the pale of society.

Under these circumstances, much as I despised and condemned him, so utterly unhappy did he seem, that I could not choose but pity him. Whether or not he discovered this by my countenance, as I occasionally passed him, I know not; but he made several efforts to accost me. His meanness of spirit even prompting him to bow, although I omitted to return the compliment, he at length forced a visit upon me one morning, as I was at breakfast in my barrack-room. Naturally surprised, I arose, and was about to request him to withdraw, but he threw himself upon my good feeling, and begged a hearing, in terms so abject, that my pity for his situation got the better of my contempt for his pusillanimous conduct, and as he asked my advice, I felt myself quite unable to refuse him the audience.

It happened unfortunately that Major Clavering at that moment paid me a visit in my quarters, to consult with me about some private theatricals he had it in contemplation to set agoing in the fort. He stopped short on observing Bully-

man seated at my table, instantly turned upon his heel, and quitted the room.

I saw that the incident would be likely to lead me into difficulties; and the event proved that I was not far out in my conjecture. Accordingly, after the morning parade, I found the visit of Lieutenant Bullyman had been canvassed amongst the officers of the 145th, and, as the cant term goes, they rather tipped me the cold shoulder. In addition to this, the major spoke to me upon the subject in a tone and manner I thought highly offensive and uncalled for. I answered him with considerable warmth, and was put under arrest for my pains. In an evil hour, I resolved to rebel against opinion and authority, and conceiving myself cut without rhyme or reason, disdaining all explanation, invited Bullyman to spend the evening in my quarters. That invitation sealed my fate.

Bullyman was a designing knave, as well as a coward. He managed to get me to espouse his quarrel, and feel a deeper resentment against my brother officers. During the time I was under arrest, his leave of absence arriving, he quitted the regiment for good, leaving me in reversion the quarrel he had been too great a coward to fight out.

In short, I was released from arrest one morning, and, after a reprimand from the major, was ordered to join my company.

After the drill was over, as I still retained a haughty and contemptuous feeling towards some of my brother officers, I joined a party, consisting of two or three officers belonging to another of the corps stationed in the fort, in a walk to the town of Inverness. After spending the day in wandering over the field of Culloden, we returned, dined at Inverness, and afterwards strolled home.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"What! shall we have incision? Shall we imbrue?
Then death rock me asleep, abridge my doleful days?
Why then, let grievous, ghastly, gaping wounds
Untwine the sisters three! Come, Atrophos, I say."

SHAKSPERE.

ON entering the mess-room, I found some half-dozen of my brother officers, who had remained after mess, seated before the fire, in the enjoyment of a glass of whisky toddy and a cigar. They looked round when I entered, but did not speak to me, and continued their conversation amongst themselves. I took a turn or two up and down the room, and at length, stopping in rear of the circle, I looked hard at them individually.

"A cold night, gentlemen," said I.

"Very," returned the major, drily, who was one of the party.

I took another turn. My blood boiled in my veins, and I felt myself about to lose all control over my actions. If any man would but have spit in my face, methought I could have been happy. However, as no one either insulted, or made room for me in the circle, I continued my quarter-deck promenade.

Presently the adjutant, entering the room, requested a word with the commandant. He arose to accompany him, and unbuckling his sword, threw it on his chair.

"I shall be back, Plume," said he, "in two minutes. Let nobody take my seat."

I stepped up to the fire, took the sword from the chair, and was about to seat myself.

"Stay, sir," said Plume, "that is Major Clavering's seat. He is returning. See, he has left his sword."

"I am quite aware of it," said I, seating myself. "I heard himself say so. A cold night this, gentlemen, as I before observed. Let me stir the fire for you."

In saying this, I thrust the major's steel scabbard and blade between the bars of the grate, stirred up the fire, and left the instrument sticking amidst the glowing coals.

The circle sat in a state of perfect amazement. They looked from one to the other, then at the sword, then at me, as I sat, with arms folded, watching the glowing falchion, as it became red hot, and then at each other again. Every man there knew the major well, his high and chivalrous spirit, and his impatience at anything like insubordination. More than one feared him, and all toadied him to the top of his bent.

During at least a quarter of an hour that he was absent, no one uttered a sentence. Not a man sipped his grog, but all pulled with double vigour at their cigars—puff, puff, puff, puff. At length, a footstep approached, and the door opened; every head turned like lightning towards it. It was the mess waiter to clear away some of the things. Again their eyes turned upon the major's red-hot brand, with looks of curiosity and amaze—

"And now sits expectation in the air."

The major's armed heel and well-known step at length were really heard in the passage, and the next moment he was in the room. He advanced towards his seat before the fire. 'Twas filled. He stopped, and was about to demand his chair, when his eye fell upon his trusty falchion turned into a poker, and left between the bars of the grate. Not the Highland Thane, when he beheld the table full, and the blood-boltered Banquo on his stool could have so glared, as glared Major Hotspur Clavering upon his some time weapon. There was no occasion

for him to ask, "Which of you has done this?" The thing spoke for itself. He touched me sharply on the shoulder; his face was livid with rage, as I started up and confronted him. Pointing to the door, as a signal for me to follow him, he turned upon his heel, and swiftly left the room. Traversing the passage, he glanced over his shoulder to see that I was behind, and passed out into the barrack square. He walked so rapidly, that I was compelled to mend my pace, in order to keep him in sight. When about the middle of the square had been gained, he turned round and accosted me.

"Can you wield the weapon you have put to so unworthy a use?" said he.

"I can," answered I.

"Be cautious, young man," said he, "I warn you that I am an expert swordsman. Unless you are yourself a good fencer, decline the weapon."

"Have no compunction, Major Clavering," said I; "the chances are, you'll find your match."

"I am glad to hear it," returned he, "'tis something out of the common custom. But the insult you have put upon me, is also singularly offensive. This is no common case—one of us must fall. The hour that saw the affront must not expire before it is wiped out. Get your weapon and friend instantly. Pass the fort, and await me. If first, beside the cairn upon the heath. Do you agree to this?"

"I do," said I.

"In a quarter of an hour I shall expect you," continued he, as he turned and sought his quarters.

Amongst the officers of the *depôt* of the —th Highlanders, I had several friends. One of them, with whom I was most intimate, had advised me that very morning to pick a quarrel amongst the officers of the 145th, as a means of righting myself with them. He could not very well, therefore, refuse to accompany me, and him I sought.

Tired with the day's excursion, he had retired to bed; but rose immediately upon my making known my errand. He rather demurred to the settlement of the affair with our regimental swords; but, at length, agreeing in consideration of the oddity of my affront to the major, we took our way to the trysting-place, as soon as he was fully equipped.

The moon shone out brightly, and the snow was upon the ground, when we left the gates of Fort George. I had had but small time for reflection; yet, as I passed the walls of the fortress, I felt that the crisis of my fate had arrived. For the first time it struck me, that at best I was about to fight a losing battle. So strange is it, that the violence of one's feeling under insult or irritation, allows no pause till the enter-tainer has stepped so far that return is impossible. Five minutes back, I felt that if I could be foot to foot with my rapier point opposed to the breast of any one of my brother

officers whose supercilious conduct had injured my honour, I should be happy. I had sought, and found my quarrel—fixed it upon one worthy my arm and weapon, and now, for the first time, “consideration came;” though too late to “whip the offending Adam out of me.” “Beware,” says Polonius, “of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in, bear it, that the opposer may beware of thee.” I was fairly embarked in one: would that I had been wary of engaging in it! The latter part of the advice was now all I had to follow.

When on the open heath, the night was so clear—one of those bright lovely nights so common in the north during winter—that the country road was distinguishable almost as plain as on a sunny day.

“I wish you had fixed this business upon any one but Major Clavering,” said my companion, “for then we might have had a chance of coming out of it without anything very serious. Now, however, you have placed us all on a quicksand. Major Clavering is a wicked fellow, when he’s regularly angry. You’ll find no boys’ play with him. Why didn’t you take an opportunity of something sulky amongst the subs.”

“I know not,” said I; “he almost asked for the quarrel, I thought, and so I indulged him. How mean you by the word wicked, as applied to Major Clavering of the —th.”

“Why, not exactly in the sense the chaplain of the regiment would understand it,” returned my friend. “I mean, that after the particular way in which you have sought him, he’ll be likely to want letting blood to some extent, before he cools down. What you have put in his pipe will want a deal of smoking, that’s all. But see, there’s the cairn, and as I live he’s there before us.”

It was even so; the cairn was now not two hundred yards from us: and a figure was flitting backwards and forwards as restlessly and wildly as Elshender, the recluse, when first seen by Hobbie Elliot, on Mickelstone Moor.

The major was alone. He had sought and found the friend he meant to employ, desired him to follow, grabbed his case of pistols, and, glowing with fervour, longing for action, anxious to wash out the stain his honour had received, had hurried to the trysting-place, where the effervescence of his passion kept him at boiling heat till he found his antagonist set before his rapier’s point.

It is singular, but not the less true, that there are a sort of men who are thus insane upon this one point—the duello. Kind and warm-hearted fellows, good soldiers, and “tall fellows,” as Falstaff has it, most estimable men, jolly companions, and even by no means easy of affront, or seeking for the quarrel, and yet withal so ready to embark in any cause which is likely to bring on the duello; and so utterly unmanageable and opposed to any sort of arrangement short of “bullets wrapped in fire,” that even the most trifling and

fancied offence, when once taken, must be wiped out by the ceremonious cartel. Irishmen and Frenchmen, the best-hearted fellows in the world, are more apt to fancy themselves called upon to go out than perhaps the natives of any other country.

Major Clavering was one of these most punctilious gentlemen: and, certainly, at the present moment, he had cause to demand most ample satisfaction for the affront I had put upon him. He stopped in his hurried walk as soon as we reached the cairn, and lifted his foraging-cap to me as our eyes met. The angry spot was upon his brow, and I felt, with Richard, that "for one or both of us the time was come." There was—there could be—no possible way of accommodating matters, after having seriously offended such as Clavering.

"My friend will be here immediately," said he. "See, he approaches. I have my pistols here, in case our swords are insufficient. I need not inquire if yours is the regulation blade, since I allow none other in the dépôt."

"Major Clavering," said I, "since you have thought proper to open a conversation before we engage in mortal conflict, perhaps you will allow me to say you have not, as commanding officer of the 145th, exactly used me with the consideration and kindness you were bound to do. I have chosen to fix this quarrel upon you, because I have observed that you have, in something, biassed the opinions of the officers of the dépôt; not only sanctioning their coolness towards me, on account of my advocating the cause of Lieutenant Bullyman, but actually, I am informed, advising my being cut in the corps."

"I would you had sought an explanation before, young man," said he: "and this might have been avoided. We all of us hoped for a reconciliation; but your great spirit, and indomitable pride, prompted you to treat every one of your brother officers with so much arrogance and hauteur, that it was impossible for any one to make advance towards a reconciliation after the offending object had removed himself from amongst us. No, sir: you have no cause of complaint. You chose between the society of your brother officers, and one who had brought disgrace upon the regiment. You became the friend, adviser, and associate of a cowardly scoundrel, whose pleasure it was, since the day he first joined, to offer gratuitous insult to his companions in arms, and then sneak out of the responsibility by sheltering himself under the regulations of the service. You witnessed his last effort, and how he evaded giving satisfaction to the man who challenged him, and you ought to have avoided his society as that of a person unfit to live amongst men of honour. This is, however, now useless recrimination. You have conferred a singularly offensive insult upon *me*. I know you sufficiently to be aware that you will be ready and willing to answer it. Enough! here is Captain O'Toole. I have possessed him with our grounds of quarrel. Draw! sir."

He drew the weapon he had brought with him, as he finished speaking, and putting himself in attitude, our swords crossed. The first half-dozen passes were sufficient to show me, had I not before known it, that the regulation-sword of the infantry of the present day is the most useless weapon that ever was invented in any age. To fence with it was impossible: and after some half-dozen clumsy thrusts and wide parries, the major, already at boiling-heat, being foiled in his lunges, changed his play, and dashing upon me, rained such a shower of blows, that had I not been extremely cautious, and given ground, he must have, some how or other, cut me down. He fought like a red-hot Paddy at a wake, and swung his blade about as though it had been a shilalegh.

How long this might have lasted, before one or other of us got an ugly wound, I cannot tell; but our swordsmanship was stopped by an accident to one of the weapons. In returning one of the major's downright blows, and being irritated at receiving a cut which had lacerated my cheek, I gave my blow with such good will, that my sword broke in two, like a piece of cast-iron, and, saving the hilt and some half-a-foot of the remaining blade, I stood weaponless, and at his mercy.

He was too chivalrous in spirit to take advantage, and immediately dropped his point; and our seconds stepped up.

"Lend me your weapon, Counterblast," said I. "Major, I thank you for your courtesy; you had me something at advantage."

"I think the affair is finished, Captain O'Toole, is it not?" said Lieutenant Counterblast to the major's second. "I'm glad it is no worse."

"Finished!" returned O'Toole: "is it finished you're maning? Not exactly. By the powers! I think it's hardly commenced. My principal is anything but satisfied. He rather desires to finish the affair like a gentleman. Hand your friend the weapon he asks for, sir. Major Clavering is quite ready."

"I do not quite relish this sort of thing, Captain O'Toole," said Counterblast. "We shall get into a scrape, I fear. I feel inclined to withdraw my principal. Enough, and more than enough, has been done. Major Clavering has had the best of it in every way: he ought to be satisfied. Can we not arrange it without proceeding further, think ye?"

"By the lord, lad! but you don't seem to understand the code of honour," said O'Toole. "You talk of withdrawing and arranging in the same breath. Permit me to say, the major and I had arranged to come here to fight. There has been quite enough shilly-shallying in the 145th, lately, methinks. We don't want to be altogether laughed out of the Fort. If you withdraw your friend, I hope you mean to take his place."

"I understand the laws of honour," returned Counterblast, "quite as well, and I think, indeed, something better than you

do yourself, Captain O'Toole; and I am of opinion that this duel has proceeded far enough. I shall, however, so far concede to yours and the major's wishes, as to permit of the affair proceeding. But I will have no more sword-work. Give them a shot a-piece, and there an end. We have the weapons ready."

"Agreed, agreed," said the captain, stepping up to his principal, to advertize him of this change of weapons: "agreed, agreed: 'ods bullets and triggers,' as the man says in the play 'let the pistol decide the matter out of hand.' I'm clearly of your opinion."

To be brief, then, we were placed with the usual distance between us.

As I received my weapon, the remembrance of the dreadful scene I had witnessed, on the occasion of my former duel with Lord Hardenbrass, came so vividly before me, that I shuddered at the prospect of another such catastrophe, and resolved to receive the major's fire, and not to return it. Counterblast, however, advised me to take good aim, and fire quick. "It's your only chance," said he: "he's a dead shot. Be steady, or you're lost."

I turned my eye, as he retired, upon my antagonist, and saw by his look that the hint was not to be neglected. My intent was instantly changed, and all qualms of conscience silenced by the angry feeling which arose at the evident sanguinary intentions of both my opponent and his second. The next moment, Captain O'Toole gave the signal, and we fired.

A stunning blow upon the head, sent me reeling three or four paces from where I stood. I recovered, and saved myself from falling, and as the smoke of my pistol blew from before my eyes, I beheld my opponent stretched at full length upon the heath. His ball had grazed my temple—mine had pierced his heart!

CHAPTER XXIX.

"There's nothing level in our cursed natures,
But direct villany. Therefore, be abhorred,
All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!
His *semblable*, yea, himself, Timon, disdains;
Destruction fang mankind!"

SHAKSPERE.

I WILL pass over the scene which followed, and my feelings upon this unhappy event. Suffice it, the next morning found myself, Counterblast, and O'Toole, prisoners in our separate barrack-rooms, under close arrest. I felt that I was irretrievably ruined, and feared my friend and second would share in my disgrace.

My anticipations were not unfounded, as far as I myself was concerned. The matter became subject of court-martial. The very members whom I had met as friends, and who were assembled when I first joined at Fort George, were again ordered to reassemble for my trial. The evidence was conclusive, and clearly in my disfavour. I had thrust a duel upon my commanding officer by the most unwarrantable insult, given before several of the officers of the corps. I was found guilty, and cashiered; the two seconds getting off with a severe reprimand. The sentence was a hard but a just one, and I was pitied by the whole corps. When too late, they saw the injury they had inflicted upon me; and interest was subsequently made, even at head-quarters, to procure my reinstatement. It however was in vain. I had no powerful friend there of my own to back my suit; and like Rob Roy, I looked east, west, north, and south, and found neither hold nor hope, neither beild nor shelter. I was a broken man! Where to go, or what to do, I knew not. About a hundred pounds remained in my purse, after I had paid and settled the few debts I had contracted whilst with the 145th: and the same night of the day I was released from arrest, found me a wanderer upon the heath, I neither knew nor cared in what direction, so that every stride I took removed me further from the walls of Fort George, where I had thus been, as I conceived, victimized and disgraced.

It was the depth of winter; the night winds pierced through my chest, like a stiletto; yet I heeded neither "winter nor rough weather." There was too hot a summer in my bosom for me to feel aught in the shape of bodily pain at that moment.

When I was about to leave my barrack-room, my servant, a rear-rank man of the company to which I belonged, a good-natured, honest-hearted fellow, who had eat, drank, and slept at the sound of the drum for the last twenty years of his life, suspecting from my manners and look that I was about either to cut my throat, or do some other rash act, after pottering about the room, and offering me a hundred different little attentions, suddenly stepped before me, and thus accosted me:—"Your honour's not a-going to leave us to-night?" he said.

"I am, Cochrane," I answered; "why do you ask?"

"There's no conveyance, that I know of, from Cumbletown," said he, "after eight o'clock to-night, sir. Have you ordered anything to fetch you away?"

"I have not," I said.

"Then how do you mean to go, sir?" he inquired.

"Walk, Cochrane," I replied.

"Where to, sir," he said, "on such a night as this?"

"I know not, my man," I answered; "perchance into my grave."

"Be persuaded, sir," he said; "I'll take your things early in the morning, before the Aberdeen coach passes. I know you want to get away quietly, and we can be off before light."

"My good fellow," I replied, "I'm off even now. I could not

remain here another night for worlds. It would kill me. I wish to avoid seeing any one."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" exclaimed the poor fellow, "I'm very sorry;—we're all sorry to part with you, sir. The men all have been liking for you, even though you've been so short a time with us."

"Farewell, my good fellow," I said.

"I've never had a hard or unkind word from you," continued the soldier. "I've served many officers, ay, and nursed many on their death-beds in the West Indies; but I never was more sorry to part with a master than I am with you. You've been too kind to me, sir. I'm sorry for your misfortune: and if I was out of the service, I'd follow and serve you for nothing."

"My good fellow," said I, "this pains me. You owe me no gratitude. I've treated you but as a master should treat a good and faithful servant; one who has anticipated my every wish. Adieu! Send my baggage to the Aberdeen coach, to be forwarded, and here is for your pains."

"Let me shake you by the hand, master," said the poor fellow, weeping. "We shall never meet again. I was to go with you in the first draught to the West Indies. Now I shall go without you."

The rules of the service are strict. No officer can well shake hands with a private in the same regiment: and I was about to draw back as the honest fellow held out his hand to press mine.

"Pshaw!" said I, "what have I to do with the service now? Am I not degraded, disgraced, and cashiered? There's my hand, my good fellow," said I. "Farewell; we shall meet no more."

I put ten guineas into his hard fist, as I wrung it. When he saw it was gold, he followed me to return it. But I refused to receive it back. Had it been two thousand, his fidelity and goodness of heart deserved it all.

I was now like Lear upon the open heath, exposed to the pelting of the pitiless storm, and that, too, in the climate of the north. My brain was so excited with all that had happened, that I held onwards straight ahead, like a ship steering across the trackless ocean. The night was dark, and the snow stung my visage, like sharp bodkins. I had no particular intention of reaching any town, but, like the headlong cavalier, with care seated behind him, was hurrying onwards, as much to conquer my mental misery by severe bodily exercise, as any other purpose. I felt it a relief when I considered that each step was bearing me away from the sound of the drums and fifes at Fort George.

The wind lulled for a few minutes, as I ran against a pile of moss-clad earth, or rock, which in the darkness I had not seen. As I felt it with my hand, I suddenly recognised it as the trysting-place of my recent disastrous duel with Major Clavering. The last prolonged note of the trumpet as the tattoo finished, like the faint blast of Roland's horn, died away in the distance, as I stopped beside the fatal cairn. It seemed like the farewell of all my future hopes and prospects. It told me, in the somewhat hacknied words

of the great wonder of all time, that for ever more "my occupation was gone." "The neighing steed, the plumed troop, the pride and circumstance of glorious war," had all, I thought, in that prolonged note of the shrill trump, bidden me an eternal adieu. I shall never forget that sound,—“the knell of my departed joys.”

I shuddered as I quitted the cairn, and, notwithstanding the increasing hurricane, pushed onwards over the heath. For some time I continued to face the wind and snow, which at times threatened to stop my breathing with its violence. If I had an intent of going towards any sort of destination, I believe my wild thoughts touched upon Aberdeen. I had a sort of half made up determination to touch there in my way to England. Though what I meant to do in England, or why I should go there at all, it would have puzzled me to say. The idea of seeking my father, or even letting him hear from me, was so completely opposite to my ideas and feelings, that I would have been torn with wild horses rather than either have appeared before him or written to him. Friends, I had none that I could think of applying to, and I seemed to myself a miserable outcast.

“Destruction fang mankind!” said I. “Earth yield me roots.

‘Timon will to the woods, where he shall find
The unkindest beast less cruel than mankind.’”

The howling blast was now answered by a roaring sound. I had walked for some hours, and in the dark, deviated from the straight line. I was brought to a stand by the wild waters which washed the coast of that part of Scotland.

I paused to consider, for the first time since I started, what my intentions were, and whither I was bound. A night walk to one of my iron frame was nothing; but still, to be cast away in this howling wilderness, on such a night as this, was something dangerous. That, however, I cared not a rush about; but as the severe cold had gradually penetrated to my heart, it had somewhat cooled my feelings, and reflection came to aid me. I sat down in the snow, and listened to the heavy and monotonous dash of the waves at my very feet. So lost was I in my cogitations, that I felt myself rapidly falling asleep. In a moment, I remembered that to sleep was to die. The love of life is as singular as it is strong. Why I should have wished to prolong so unfortunate a career I know not; but I successfully combated the drowsy feeling, started up, and, turning my back upon the sea, once more at a venture, wandered over the waste.

The snow had now, in some places, drifted so deeply, that I made but little way, and the exertion of walking kept me warm. It mattered not which way I went, as I felt confident I should obtain no shelter for that night. All I could do was, by moving onwards during this long night, to keep myself alive. Silently and laboriously, therefore, I wended on. Hour after hour found me plunging into some deep wreath of snow, and re-threading my

steps out of it again. No sounds met my ear, but the rushing winds, and the deep cry of the bog bittern.

At length to my joy, yes, I actually felt joyful, when I beheld the first faint streaks of the breaking day. "Great evils (says Shakspeare) medicine the less." From confinement to my room, whilst under arrest, this long and laborious exertion had wearied me. I felt now chilled to death, too; the cold struck more intensely to my feelings just at this time, than it had done at any other part of the night. As the light became brighter, I looked around me to see where I was; all was enveloped in one white winding-sheet, a dreary, inhospitable waste.

The snow had now, for the moment, abated, and day having quite broke, I looked out in every direction in the hope of spying some cottage. Nothing, however, was to be seen; no hut, no tree, no shelter of any sort or kind, not even a bird! I had wandered amongst the hills, and was completely cast away. Weary, and sick for want of food, I became almost unable to proceed. The labour of walking in the deep snow was so great, that it took me half-an-hour to gain a hundred yards to the front. At length, I heard far, far away, the bark of a dog. It came fitfully upon the piercing blast; it was evidently miles away, yet I turned towards it, as the tempest-tossed barque turns at the signal gun. Steep hills, and ravines filled with drifted snow, lay between me and the assistance I sought. I felt that to gain it was hopeless. It was doubtless some shepherds trying to recover their buried sheep; they would probably be away before I could reach them. Still I made great efforts, and struggled through more than one deep drift. At length I felt myself failing; as I became more and more faint, a feeling of horror and something like the approach of death seized me. I felt alarmed at the thought of dying in the open heath, alone miserably, with no soul to look upon me as I lay. The thought unnerved me. The solitude of the place was startling; my legs failed me, my brain whirled round, and I fell senseless upon the ground.

How long I remained thus embedded in the snow, I know not; but when returning to life, I opened my eyes, and partially regained my senses, I felt myself rather roughly handled by several persons, who had laid me before a roaring turf fire, and with might and main were rubbing my body and limbs with salt.

As I recovered under the operation, I raised myself to look around me and at my tormentors, and felt not a little surprised at the scene which presented itself.

In the first place, I was stark naked, surrounded by several females, of all ages, sizes, and shapes, from fourteen, to fourscore and upwards. A young and buxom lass had hold of one of my legs, which she chafed with might and main; an old and blear-eyed crone was in possession of another, one or two others were scrubbing my arms and chest, and one old wife, who was seated upon a stool and supporting my head in her lap, ever and anon

poured a few drops of full-proof whisky (their universal panacea) down my throat.

The whole affair was managed and gone through, as if it was an every-day occurrence with them. There was no mock modesty with either young or old; they had received my insensible carcase from their shepherd fathers and brothers, who had found me lying stiff in the snow, as they searched for their scattered flock, had proceeded to strip, and baste, and roast me before the fire, just the same as if I had been one of their own kith and kin, or a frozen pig, or frost-bitten infant.

As soon as they perceived that I was conscious of my unclad and primitive state, they threw an old scarf over my body, and assisting me up, placed me in a sort of dark oven-like opening, which served half the family as a sleeping place. There I lay snug and warm, and except that I was stung and tormented with whole myriads of fleas, might have felt tolerably comfortable.

My kind and hospitable entertainers now busied themselves in preparing a mess of hot brose, which they obliged me to wash down my throat with large draughts of milk. In fact, they tended me as though I had been one of their nearest and dearest kindred.

As I lay at leisure in this warm berth, I contemplated the curiosities of the hut I had been brought into. It was a low turf-built dwelling, erected against the side of a small hillock. The smoke of the ever-burning peat escaped partially through a hole in the roof, the remainder curled in huge volumes around the interior, making the room so hot and oppressive, that none but these hardy mountaineers could have thriven in such a reeking kiln.

The females, old and young, were for the most part, seated on low stools or broken chairs, and crouching over the peat reek, apparently employed in watching an iron skillet, large enough almost to have served for the witches' caldron; every now and then one of the younger lasses, at a hint from some of the crones, would start up, heave open the door, a feat (from the violence of the wind) requiring all her strength, and take a look out into the wilderness.

There was hardly anything in the shape of furniture in the apartment which did not seem encrusted with the smoke and soot of half a century. Three or four children lay upon a collection of sheep-skins in one corner, and Crummie, their cow, quietly chewed the cud in another. There was also a small square portion at the opposite end of the hut to where I was deposited in my berth, which was partially partitioned off, forming a sort of inner room.

As I lay observing this specimen of a shepherd's home, I began to wonder what had become of my habiliments, and whether I should ever again be permitted to wear my nether garments, which had contained in the depths of their pockets the small stock of cash remaining to me in the world, the trifling hundred pounds I had brought with me from Fort George. Alas! how little did I

then know of Highland honesty, and how much less did my injurious suspicions entitle me to the Highland welcome I had so lately experienced.

As soon as I felt myself somewhat restored, I determined to rise; and after thanking the very handsome specimen of a Highland peasant lass who had been attending upon me, and performing the office of nurse, I begged for my habiliments. She brought them to me instantly, and drawing a dilapidated sort of curtain, left me to equip myself.

When I turned out of my crib, however, and attempted to walk towards the assembled party, with the assistance of my bare-legged and short-skirted attendant, I found myself quite unequal to the task. My brain whirled, my limbs again seemed unable to support me, and I was fain once more to recline upon my couch. In fact, I felt so exceedingly unwell, that I was compelled to lie where I was, from utter inability to rise. In short, the violent beating of my pulse, the scorching heat which burned me up, and the agony of my head, showed me that I was likely to have a violent fever. I was not mistaken, but grew worse and worse towards nightfall, and before the next morning, delirium coming on, I lay in considerable danger for some days.

All I remember of that day, was the return of the shepherds towards nightfall, and the bustle consequent upon their supper being served to them. They gave up their rude couch to the invalid, and I was tended by one or two of the females during that night, whilst the remainder of the family disposed themselves to rest in different parts of the hovel. In short, I lay dangerously ill for more than a fortnight in the shepherd's hut, and during that time was nursed and tended by these hospitable Highlanders with the greatest care and kindness, and I remained their debtor for a life twice saved.

When sufficiently recovered, I used to take gentle exercise. On these occasions I was accompanied by my unsophisticated and gentle nurse, the girl who had from first to last been my principal attendant. She was a dark-haired girl of about seventeen. Strong and athletic in make, her figure was perfect; and had she been clad in a full suit of armour, which she would have been quite equal to the weight of, she would have looked a perfect Joan of Arc.

The Highland females have been generally noted by the English for irregular features, and cheeks as red as their top-knots, awkward ungainly figures, great splay feet, and hands big enough for a conjuror to hide the pack under. A sort of female Dugald creturs. Such is not, however, altogether the case, as many of the lower orders of Scottish females are patterns of rustic beauty, and albeit sometimes rather in the Rubens' style, yet their Amazonian forms are perfect.

Euphemia M'Tavish, the eldest daughter of the shepherd under whose roof I had thus been sheltered, was quite a rose in the wilderness. The colours on her cheek were even more

beautiful than the hues of the flowers of the garden. Her features were somewhat large, but beautifully formed, with eyes like the beads in a wax doll, teeth perfectly faultless, and hair which, by one shake when unconfined, would, I should think, have covered her whole body, *à la Magdalène*. Her figure, I have said, was rather of the largest, but then it was perfectly splendid in its way; and had she been clad in fashionable silks and satins, and wafted for promenade to the west end of the town, she would have created quite a sensation amongst the dandies and loungers on the Regent-street promenade.

Inured to the biting winds of the hills, and frequently for whole days helping her father and other relatives to look after their flocks, the stately walk of this child of nature, with head thrown back, and upright form, was what few girls, who had undergone the training both of the drill-serjeant and the fashionable dancing-master, could have approached, even in imitation.

With this beautiful shepherdess, then, whom I named Marsala, I wandered about for the first few days after my illness. She spoke in a dialect so broad, that at first I could scarcely understand her; but after a few days' companionship, I began to comprehend her northern accent, and she to listen more profitably to the more refined and scholarly talk of the Englisher.

The shepherd and his family, which consisted of three generations, had made every effort to render their residence as comfortable to me as their means would allow. The small closet-like apartment, in their spacious bothie, or cottage, had been given up for my peculiar use, and two old crones, with Euphemia, had been sent to lodge with the married son, whose cot was half a mile up the glen, so that I was tolerably comfortable, and considering the situation to which I was reduced, almost happy. Indeed, the change of life was so great, living thus amidst the storm and the tempest, nursed to sleep by the roaring winds at night, and awoke again by the howling blast in the morning, that perhaps no other situation could have so effectually banished my cares from my remembrance. In short, I gradually became, as it were, one of the family; and, like Alfred in the neat-herd's cottage, was often to be found watching, that the oatmeal bannock did not burn over the peat fire.

The whole family, indeed, became attached to me; and in the long and dreary winter nights, as we sat around the glowing turf, they would listen to the tales, stories, and songs, I sought to amuse them with, in the most extraordinary state of wonderment and admiration.

On these occasions the eccentric Euphemia would nestle herself down on the floor beside me, and gaze up into my face with the delight of a child of three years old; she had constituted herself my servant and nurse, and had no more idea of any impropriety in following me wherever I went, like a pet spaniel, than a wild Indian would.

As to the rest of the family, innocent in thought and deed, they

were well pleased to see their children, one and all, pay attention to the English officer, and anticipate all his wants. He was sick, sorry, and homeless, and that was a sufficient reason that they ought to shelter and treat him with care and kindness.

"I must be thinking soon of leaving you, Donald," said I, one evening, when beginning to feel myself growing strong enough to travel. I considered I ought no longer to inconvenience these generous peasants with my company. "I must be soon now leaving you," said I.

"Hout tout," returned Donald, "fat de'il's the mon talking off? Leave us, quotha! what for leave us, mon? Ye'll no think o't, I hope, till the snow's clean awa."

"Why, my good fellow," said I, "I cannot think of staying a day after I'm fit for travel. I've burthened you too long already."

"Aweel, aweel, mon," returned the shepherd, "dinna ye fash yer sel about the burthen o't. When we wish ye awa, ye'll ken it soon eneuch, I'se warrant ye. An ye talk any more about that I'se tell ye, I'm sorry we ever picked ye up from the snow. Ye'll no get away from this quite so easily, as I can tell you."

"What, then," said I, "do you mean to keep me here all winter, Donald?"

"Hout ay! winter, autumn, summer, and a', if ye like to stop amang us, all yer life if ye'll stay wi' us. Troth, but we'll make a shepherd o' ye. Ye say you've no friends in your own land, and the red coats ha'e turned their backs upon ye, what for no stop amang us? I like ye, mon: yer the only Englisher I ever was acquaint wi', and I like ye much. The fule bodies of English wha have come away to shoot with the laird at the castle, I did na muckle care for awa; they were o'er braw for me. But ye're clean another guess sort o' a body, and I think there's the making o' a gude hill-mon in ye, when ye get strang. Ay, ay, we'll mak a right down shepherd o' ye yet."

"But, my good Donald," said I, "you put it out of my power to stop, till the weather breaks up even, because you will not take any remuneration for my bed, board, and education."

"Dinna mention it, lad, again," said Donald, sharply; "we don't do the like o' that here. You've gi'en the gudewife a braw gowd chain, fit for a born duchess: and the lass Phœme, too, has gotten rings from ye, enough to tocher her, when she's minded to wed."

It was thus those hospitable people treated me, and therefore, finding my company not disagreeable to them, but that they actually wished me to stay, the novelty of the situation, too, rather helping me to forget my late misfortunes, I resolved, whilst the weather continued so untoward, to shelter myself under their humble roof.

Now that I was becoming stronger, however, I loved to penetrate into the glens and fastnesses around, and explore their solitudes, just at this time more congenial to my frame of mind than any other scene to which I could have been introduced.

At other times I spent my time in rambling with the handsome Euphemia, when the weather permitted, listening to her artless conversation, and telling her of the wonders of the world abroad, as much amused at her childish astonishment as she was at the marvels I related her.

The weather had somewhat changed whilst I had thus taken refuge with this family. To incessant snow, had succeeded tremendous rains. The rivulets and burns, which, with gentle murmur, were wont to glide through the waste, or leap down the glens and gullies, were now swollen into little torrents, and in many places in the flats, where they had become dammed up, had accumulated into tiny lakes.

Euphemia, with her unshod feet, a shepherd's maud, thrown scarfwise across her snowy bosom, a remnant of plaid thrown over her head in place of bonnet, and her tartan petticoat, a world too short for her well-grown limbs, was often now, by her sire's command, on the hills from daybreak until near nightfall. Sometimes, over night, she would make me promise to find her out, and tell me where she thought it most likely I should fall in with her. Occasionally I kept my word, and spent hours in chatting to her, and listening to her somewhat original conversation. To some her manners might have appeared bold, but her perfect innocence threw so great a charm over everything she said or did, that it was impossible to quarrel with this freedom.

"This, methought, is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the greensward. Nothing she does, or seems,
But smacks of something greater than herself."

CHAPTER XXX.

"May never glorious sun reflex his beams
Upon the country where you make abode !
But darkness, and the gloomy shade of death
Environ you, till mischief and despair
Drive you to break your neck, or hang yourself.
Thou art in a parlous state, shepherd."

SHAKSPEARE.

ONE morning I had accompanied Euphemia in her peregrinations and rounds upon the hills. It was a raw and gusty day, and after driving some of the stragglers from the swamps and morasses they had straggled into, we descended the mountains, and entered the strath along which our road lay, towards home.

Euphemia was still attending to her duties, with her colly-dog at her side, as I threw myself, something wearied, upon a heathery bank, and lay and watched her. Wending her way along the side of a hill, she endeavoured to drive away some of the sheep she saw in dangerous proximity to the still increasing waters. I

had never felt my admiration so great for my fair companion as at this moment. Hitherto I had looked upon her as a beautiful child, and though certainly a fine grown child, yet so infantine in manner, and although extremely talented, so untaught and ignorant of the ways even of persons in her own sphere, that except as a beautiful specimen of rustic loveliness, I had hardly thought about her.

As I watched her now, however, standing erect upon a pinnacle of rock, calling to her dog, and directing his movements after a stray sheep, the wind, too, blowing her tartans, and her beautiful figure displayed as perfectly as the drapery clings to and makes more lovely the rounded limbs of a statue: 'as I watched her thus reclaiming some of the luxuriant brown hair which had escaped from the fillet which usually bound it, I thought I had never before seen a more commanding and exquisite form. Unconsciously, I began to look upon her with different feelings to those with which I had hitherto regarded her.

"How happy (methought) ought the man to be, whose ambition prompted him no further than to wear out life amidst these torrents and glens, dreading no enemy, 'but winter and rough weather,' his riches consisting in his flock, and his companion such a creature as this lovely Euphemia M'Tavish. Ah!" said I, "it were, indeed, the happier life.

"To be no better than a homely swain,
To sit upon a hill as I do now,
And carve out dials quaintly point by point.
So many hours must I tend my flock,
So many hours must I take my rest,
So many hours must I contemplate,
So many hours must I sport myself,
So many days my ewes have been with young,
So many weeks ere the poor fools will yean,
So many years ere I shall shear the fleece,
So minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years,
Pass'd over to the end they were created,
Would bring white hairs unto a quiet grave."

"Yes," continued I, as Euphemia, after successfully extricating her sheep, bounded to the spot, and threw herself panting and out of breath by my side, where she lay, her cheek upon her hand listening with the greatest attention, and eyes wide open in wonder and admiration at my rhapsody. "Ah! my Euphemia!" said I, as I patted her cheek,

"What a life were this! how sweet! how lovely.
Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds, looking on their silly sheep,
Than doth a rich embroidered canopy
To kings that fear their subjects' treachery?"

The buoyant spirits of my shepherdess companion were always quieted when I commenced any of my Shaksperian rhapsodies.

She was extremely apt, and the melody of the tragic rhyme pleased her. Like sweet music, it saddened her spirit, and if she did not understand all she heard, perhaps she did not like it the less for that. At the present time she lay with her bright eyes gazing intently up in my face, and an expression of so much melancholy in her countenance, that I finished my quotation abruptly and was about to take the hand which lay upon the neck of the faithful dog, who was her constant companion. She anticipated me, however, seized upon my offered hand, and carrying it to her mouth, covered it with kisses.

This was the first announcement to me that the artless shepherdess entertained any other feelings towards the careless idler who had helped to pass away the time by sauntering at her side, than those of common friendship, and I felt startled and angry with myself at the announcement.

"Euphemia," said I, "how is this? you weep, my pretty maiden? 'Tis the first time I ever saw tears visit those laughing eyes. What ails thee?"

For some time she continued silent, and hid her face in her hands. I drew her towards me, and as I kissed away the tears in her eye, coaxed her to tell me in express terms that which I now too well knew.

"Heed me not," said she; "I'm but a silly bairn, and weep at what I suld be glad of. I weep because ye're now recovered from your illness."

"Why do you weep for that, Euphemia?" said I.

"Because," she returned, "now you're weel, you'll soon be leaving Glen Orchis never to return. I shall never again find one who can sing to me the songs you have sung, or say such words as you have spoken. Oh, don't leave our hills for the southern land, where, ye say, ye hae no friends. Stay with me, and I'll be your sister, indeed; indeed I loe you far better than any sister ye hae in the lowlands."

As I gazed upon the announcer of her own feelings towards me, and regarded her exquisite face and form, thus thrown in my way, far, far away amongst the lonely and silent mountains, with no witnesses to our loves but perhaps the antlered monarch of the waste couching in his bed of fern, my heart was touched.

"Euphemia," said I, "you might have had cause to hate me more than you can possibly love me. I did intend to leave Glen Orchis, but it was before I knew any one in it entertained for me other sentiments than those of friendship. You say truly, when you say I have nothing in the south. I have even worse than nothing, for I am an outcast, with a brand set upon me. I am a disgraced and broken man, without purse, profession, or prospect. For one minute only I have hesitated whether I should leave you at this spot for ever, or, for ever remaining unknown and forgotten by my kindred, and with thee for my companion, wear out my life amongst these hills. It is past, Euphemia, firm and irrevocable is my resolution. Thou art mine

own, my beautiful. I have still enough left to suit me all points for a shepherd swain. We will buy sheep, take a cot somewhere near at hand, and part no more. The hand you have kissed, my Euphemia, is dyed with the blood of a fellow-creature. By the laws of God and man it stands condemned. Such as it is, however, I offer it to thee. But hold off, my Phœmia, said I, as I kissed her forehead, and extricated myself from the embrace she answered me with. "I am a hot-headed and exceedingly inconsiderate youth. Not all the snows upon the frozen ridges of the Grampians yonder, could cool down the fire thy beauty and love hath raised. The wolf is in the fold, lass, and 'till Holy Church incorporate two in one,' as good Friar Laurence says, we'll have no more pastorals, no more hill-side rambles. When I look upon thee, I need not wonder that 'a sceptre's heir thus affected a sheep-hook.'"

I arose, as I spoke, to proceed towards our home. The rains, I have said, had been both violent and of long continuance. For many days there had been no cessation in their fall. On this day, however, the weather had been somewhat fairer, and had allowed of our loitering longer than usual in our ramble. We had rested upon the side of a small hillock. The rivulet which wound half around it in its every-day course, was now a perfect torrent, and completely environed us. Without any perceptible cause, within the last hour the waters on every side had swollen, and were rushing and whirling in almost every direction through the strath we had descended to. The colly-dog, as if conscious of our situation, threw his head in the air, and uttered a long-drawn howl. The first thought of Euphemia was for the safety of her sheep. In the next glance she threw around her, she saw reason to fear for mine and her own escape.

While we stood on a little hillock, almost petrified with astonishment, the waters, foaming and whirling in a hundred directions had evidently risen around us. There was no time for deliberation. Euphemia grasped me by the hand, and pointed to a bridge which crossed the streamlet about a quarter of a mile from us. It was one of those ancient structures frequently to be seen amongst the hills, an old grey-looking narrow bridge, which had, perhaps, witnessed the march of Bruce's soldiers, and since then had aided the Covenanters and hill-folk, in their gatherings and contentions. Its very look spoke of battle, flight and pursuit; a grey and moss-clad remnant of other days, bleaching in the solitude of the moors, like the pyramid in the desert.

The banks where it was thrown across, were higher than elsewhere, and the rivulet consequently deeper. Could we gain that bridge, we might easily escape along the side of the hill on its other side. I seized Euphemia by the hand, and we turned and descended the hillock into the waters where they were shallowest. They were in so much commotion that the task required our utmost care lest we should be lifted from our feet

in the attempt. Once or twice we were nearly whirled round by its force. The dog was carried, spite of all his efforts, far away from us before he could get footing upon a dry spot, with at least twenty torrents between him and his mistress. Him we never saw again.

With my companion fast clutched by one arm around the waist, I reached the heather on the other side. We ran along it, crossed two or three more increasing streams, which seemed to dance on, as though bubbling from the earth, instead of descending from the uplands, and had nearly gained the bridge.*

It now stood isolated amongst the waters, and all around was like the sea. We were upon the stony causeway, which was somewhat higher than the moss on either hand, and consequently, although under water in many places, yet if we could manage to keep it, we might still gain and cross the bridge.

Huge pine trees, sheep, and masses of thatch, apparently belonging to some cottages in the glen far away, were to be seen whirling about in the flood, as we paused to take breath, and observe more carefully our route.

"Haste ye," said Euphemia, "seize yon staff floating before us, 'twill help ye. Mark weel the white stanes beneath yer feet, and come awa."

Hand in hand we struggled on.

"I ken the causeway weel," said Euphemia. "Mind, it turns a bittie here away. Dinna pause, for the love of heaven, for when yon trees gain the arch, the brig falls as sure as death!"

We accordingly kept our eyes now upon the causeway, a foot deep in the water which rushed past, and now upon the collection of huge pine trees which came whirling along in the current of the river towards the devoted and brave old bridge. It was a well-contested race, and likely to prove a dead heat. Sometimes the trees (which "by the spurs had been plucked up," and were now washed from the forest above) seemed to meet with some rocky impediment in their progress, and would labour and roll over, their huge roots and branches mounting slowly out of the torrent, like some enormous reptile in the agonies of death; then again, becoming detached, and darting downwards in the red stream, they were lost to sight; till at length, spite of our efforts, they reached the bridge before us. I watched the structure, as the engineer watches his sea-built tower when the storm howls loudest. The next moment and we had reached it.

The bridge contained two arches; both were now choked up by the accumulated trees, which lay athwart its buttresses, and as more and more were each instant added, the pressure (as Euphemia predicted) threatened the safety of the fabric. There was no time for consideration. The moment we had gained

* For an account of this extraordinary flood, read Sir Dick Lauder's work on the subject.

a footing upon the first stone of the bridge, the dammed-up waters rushed round its extremity with fearful violence. Hurrying on, we gained its centre. I felt it shake fearfully, as we began to descend, and before we had gone half-a-dozen paces, with a dreadful crash, the entire building seemed to dissolve from beneath our feet, and the next instant we were plunged into the roaring flood.

I had attempted to seize upon my companion at the first symptoms of the dissolution of the fabric. But she was whirled from my grasp with fearful violence, and carried out of my reach in an instant. Being a good swimmer, I arose after the first immersion, and struck out manfully.

I looked in every direction for my companion in misfortune, but for some moments in vain. Luckily, the greater part of the trees were for the first minute or so, detained by fragments of the foundations of the arches, or I must have been overwhelmed and borne beneath them. Onwards rushed the waters; a dozen whirling pools sucking and choking on either hand. It was all I could do to avoid being drawn within their influence. As I struck out with the stream, I beheld, for one moment, the arms and hands of Euphemia above the surface, and then she disappeared for ever in an eddy towards the shore. Faithful in death, the poor girl was thus the means of saving me. Striking out with all my remaining strength towards the spot, in the hope of reaching her, I got a footing, and was enabled to gain the hill-side. The next instant, on came a mass of trees, followed by a sea of foam. Guided by their progress, I ran along the bank for some distance, in the hope of again seeing Euphemia, and plunging to her rescue. It was, however, in vain; I saw not even the hem of her garment to guide my search.

I was now alone upon the hill; the day was drawing to a close; the sky looked black and awful on all sides, and the whole country before me was inundated with the still increasing waters. It seemed as if the last day had arrived, and there was another flood toward.

So many mishaps had happened to me, that this new misfortune and the death of my companion, seemed but a consequence of my unlucky stars.

"Yes," said I, as I stood helplessly, gazing upon the dreadful flood before me, "the scene I think is likely to end here, and 'tis best so. 'Affliction seems enamoured of my parts, and I am wedded to calamity.'" I threw myself upon the ground, determined to await my fate. "Let the floods come, and wash my swollen body into the main of waters; then, Britain, 'I'll owe thee nothing,'—not even a grave."

I wept as I thought upon the miserable death of the poor Euphemia. Suddenly the remembrance of her hospitable relatives came upon me, and their likely danger. I felt unwilling to present myself before them; but the thought that they must necessarily be endangered by this roaring tempest, as I beheld the

planks, beams, and fragments, together with stacks of hay, hurried onwards in the flood, obliterated all idea but that of trying to save.

Their cottage was some three miles from where I then was. It was directly on the other side of the hill. By clambering it, I might cross over, and perhaps reach it before the waters rose to its destruction, as I felt certain it stood on higher ground than that on which I lay.

Jumping up, therefore, I commenced the ascent. Clambering from crag to crag, like some maniac just escaped from confinement, and gaining the summit, I traversed the hill tops, and descended towards the hospitable cottage.

I came, however, too late; the waters were out, and partially covered the flats below; all I saw being the remains of my late refuge. The stream swept along under the bank it was reared against, and the inhabitants had either forsaken the wreck or perished. Shocked, and struck with dread, I again turned to the hill, in order to save my own life. I seemed the last man crawling and climbing, reptile-like, amidst the ruins of a sinful world. The love of life had returned, however, and I felt once more anxious to prolong my unhappy existence.

The rain again descended in torrents, the night came on sudden and dark, and for many hours I wandered on the mountains, waiting anxiously for the dawn to appear.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I am amazed, methinks; and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of this world."

"Now happy he, whose cloak and cincture can
Hold out this tempest."

SHAKSPERE.

I HELD onwards, as well as I could guess, in the direction of a village I knew to be some ten miles off; but when the dawn appeared, I found myself upon a part of the hills I had not, in my late wanderings ever before visited. A deep ravine was directly before me. The mist was so thick, that I could not make out distinctly whether another hill was beyond it, or the inundated plains. To my surprise, the well-known smell of burning peat saluted my nostrils; yet, to all appearance, I was solitary upon the mountains; up, up upon the summits, where the deer alone loved to rest, far from the habitations of man. I stepped upon a small heathery mound, from whence the peat-reek appeared to emanate, in order to peer over the declivity beyond it, and the roof giving way beneath my feet, I was instantly, as I conceived, precipitated at least half-a-dozen yards into the earth.

To my further astonishment, however, I found myself suddenly

introduced from the solitude of the desert to the society of my fellow-mortals. A turf fire was alight, and all the means and appliances at hand for the manufacture of whisky. The still was at work. I had tumbled into a whisky bothie.

The hardy smugglers were as much surprised at my unwonted appearance, as I was for the moment gratified at finding myself, instead of smothering in some kelpie's flow, in their warm and comfortable snugger. They seized me rudely, almost before I could recover my feet or utter a sentence.

"Ta ga'ger!" said a great burly fellow, who held me firmly by the collar; "ta cursed ga'ger amang huz. Hugh, diel take ye, mon; but ye're no blate to come amang us after yon fashion."

"God! but we ha' grippit ye noo," said the fellow who had me on the other side. "Fat deil brought ye speering here for, ye dam'd loon. I thought the floods wad at least ha' keppit yer prying een at hame e'noo. May I be d— but we'll raddle yer bones, now we ha' gotten a haud o' ye."

"Stay," said a third, bringing a lighted brand from the fire. "It's no just the gauger ava. That chield's frae the castle. I'll swear it'll just be ane o' the sojer officers frae Bræmar. Fat diel are ye, mon? Just speak out at ance, Cot tam ye."

"Gentlemen," said I, "if you'll allow me to rise, I'll do my best. I'm neither gauger nor soldier officer from Bræmar, but just an unlucky traveller, escaping from the washes; and who, in endeavouring to cross the mountains, unwarily fell into your infernal dwelling."

"It's a lie—a d— lie!" said the first speaker. "Ye're frae Argarff or Midmar; and ye shall rue still-hunting this bout, anyhow. We ken the sojers were out the last week, but we thought the floods had gotten them, Cot tam them!"

I had heard, whilst at M'Tavish's cottage, that two gaugers had been caught and murdered by the smugglers, only a week or two before; and I also knew that the detachment which had marched to Strathdon, had given them so much annoyance, that they had threatened to attack the garrison. I therefore made up my mind to a skinfull of broken bones at the least. How that might have turned out, I cannot say; but our controversy was brought to a close by the skirling sound of a bagpipe, which sounded in the ravine below.

A narrow zig-zag path formed the approach to the entrance of the bothie, and three or four of the Highlanders, after listening for a moment, rushed out, and peered over into the mist below. They quickly returned, and spoke rapidly to their comrades, in a harsh-sounding guttural, which I conceived to be the Gaelic for "the red coats being at hand."

It was even so. The "unwearied and indefatigable," as they have been somewhere described, the flat-foots, were at hand. What can stop them? Through flood, through fire, they come; nothing interferes with their discipline; and here they were, amidst the storm, like slot hounds upon the track. They were

still-hunting upon the mountains; laudably employed, burning bothies, making libations of the full proof, and giving the malt to the streams.

At the announcement of the approach of the party, several of the whisky brewers had attempted to escape, by gaining the summit of the declivity upon which the bothie was reared or excavated. But they found that the rear was guarded by a part of the same detachment who occupied the pass below. They returned therefore, into their den, bending savage looks upon me as they hastily snatched up one or two long and antique-looking fowling pieces, in order to make resistance against the on-coming foe.

I had seen from the first, that any attempt at escape would be likely to bring upon me certain destruction from one side or other. I therefore thought it best to remain perfectly quiet under the circumstances, and trust to the jade, Fortune, although she had already played me so many unlucky tricks.

I was not long kept in suspense. The clash and clatter of arms was heard without the bothie; and the well-known word of command was shouted out in a somewhat theatrical tone and style, at three or four armed sailor-looking men, headed by the gauger, rushed in at the doorway, followed by a couple of king's officers and a sergeant. I had seen by the demeanour of the smugglers that they meant mischief—and I was not deceived.

"Ne'er heed the red coats," shouted the fellow who seemed their leader, "shoot the cursed gauger and his men."

A short, rapid, and unequal combat instantly took place, the smugglers not having time to fire above two shots before they were overwhelmed in their close quarters, and captured. The gauger, who had been wounded, however, fired again; and the shot taking effect upon my poor person, entered the fleshy part of my shoulder.

I cannot say that I felt any great surprise when I found myself hit. Like Meg Merrilies, when shot by Dirk Hatterick, I "felt sure it would come my way." My only astonishment was, that I had not received the gauger's bullet through my brain, instead of my shoulder. The wound was but trifling; and, except that I felt my arm benumbed, and found myself bleeding, I should not have at first suspected that I was hurt.

"What manner of man is this?" said the officer who had entered with the storming party, as he stepped up to me, whilst the smugglers were being secured and taken out; "may I beg the favour of your name?"

My presence in the bothie was soon explained, and the subaltern seemed delighted at making my acquaintance.

He was a short, slight, *distingué*-looking youth, rather theatrical in his style and bearing; and in everything he said and did, he seemed as though he was thinking more of playing a part upon the boards, in the false-exciting scene, than acting upon life's dull stage in this work-a-day world.

"You bleed, sir," said he, quickly, as he saw the crimson drop

trickling from the sleeve of my coat; "you have received a hurt in this squabble. Here, Sergeant Cameron, help this gentleman to ascend the path. I will look at your hurt, sir, with my personal eye. We, luckily, are not altogether unskilled in Galenicals."

When, therefore, I emerged from the hut, I found the flat on the hill-top in possession of a party of a Highland regiment. They stood at ease, with ordered arms, shoulder to shoulder; their tartans fluttering, and their accoutrements clattering in the furious blast; whilst one or two smaller parties were to be seen planted upon the shelving rock of the ascent beneath, looking more like flocks of scarts or sea-gulls than soldiers.

Altogether, what with the lone and desolate scene—the deep ravine and the swollen torrent, the misty mountain tops in the distance, dark-looking and vast, seeming as if they stretched away to the far-end of the globe; the soldiers enranked upon the heath, their prisoners in a little knot before them, and the bothie enveloped in a sheet of flame; the scene was quite romantic, and almost realized some of Sir Walter's descriptions.

The subaltern of the party was as good as his word; he carefully bandaged up my wound before he attended to anything else. He then introduced me to the captain of the Highlanders; and whilst the detachment was ordered to pile arms, we sat down to the enjoyment of breakfast.

During the meal, I had been somewhat struck by the appearance of the captain of this detachment. He was altogether one of the most singular-looking and silent soldiers it had ever been my fate to fall in with. His subaltern, who appeared, indeed, the commanding officer of the party, was altogether the creature of impulse. But the chief seemed to require, every now and then, a flap with one of those bladders described by Baron Munchausen in his *Travels to the Moon*, where the aristocrats of that curious bourne dropped into a sort of lethargy unless they were frequently boxed, in order to bring them to recollection and activity.

He was a square-built Highlander, with a remarkably good-tempered, though exceedingly Quixotic visage. Stooping much in figure, and wearing, like Hudibras, a goodly hump upon one shoulder; he had but one eye, and always was accommodated with spectacles on nose.

Although naturally a remarkably stout-built and strong man, hard toil, climate, war, and disease, had reduced him to the mere skeleton of the Hercules he had been in his youth. In short, he cut rather a queer figure beside the picturesquely clad company he ornamented. The casket, however rude and rough it looked, contained a jewel both rare and priceless; for, notwithstanding the eccentricity of his look and manners, he bore a heart and disposition, which would have done honour to the fairest form in nature.

He stood beside his men, as I said, with his shoulders above his head. His drawn sword, carried hilt foremost under one arm, and a Scotch mull in his hand, from which he so continually fed

his nose, that although the pockets of his coat were filled likewise with rappee, the feature seemed capable of soon exhausting his stock.

His accoutrements were as odd as his person; for, being his own commanding officer whilst upon the hills with his company, the only thing he chose to exercise authority in, was in relieving himself from the annoyance of ever harnessing himself in his regimentals. Consequently, he was now out in virtual command of his men, in a full suit of tartans upon his body, being a large pocketed shooting-jacket, with waistcoat and continuation to match, and a huge tropical wide-brimmed straw hat on his head.

"Captain M'Kilt," said the mercurial ensign to his commandant, "I'm going to pile arms here: fall out, sir."

The captain glanced up from the turf beneath his feet, gave a snort and a whistle, something like the catcall heard from the gallery of a theatre, took a goodly pinch from his mull, sheathed his sword, and obeyed the orders of the inferior in military grade.

"Singular man," said he, as he turned about and regarded the youth who thus took upon himself the command. "Singular man, whew!" continued he, with another sharp whistle.—"Singular man. But devilish clever fellow. Whew! Subaltern of my company; command a brigade, that chap."

Indeed, what with snorting, whistling, snuffling, and admiring the versatility of his officer, this eccentric and easy commander seemed to be fully employed, and quite contented to have the trouble of command taken from his shoulders. With spectacles on nose, he watched his very movement, and awaited his cue, as to what was to be the next order, with the greatest apparent interest.

We had, as I said, sat ourselves down upon the heather, and were partaking of a slight refreshment, furnished forth from the haversack carried by the servant of Ensign Altamont de Montdidier. Whilst doing so, I learned from him the circumstances which had brought his party so opportunely to this spot. "We were ordered out," said he, "some three days back, from Bræmar Castle, in order to make a foray upon these mountains, and burn out the whisky trade. 'Harry the wives of Greenlaws goods,' and give them light to set their hoods."

"For two days," continued he, "we followed the hunt, carrying fire and sword over rock, glen, and mountain. Turk Gregory never did such deeds. Last night, however, 'as I upon advantage did remove,' half my powers were nearly devoured by the unexpected flood. These washes surrounded a party of the men, who were under my friend M'Kilt. M'Kilt, I'm saying, you were nearly victimised by an element you abhor. Here's to ye in a fluid we have captured, more to your taste. Washael! M'Kilt. This is whisky, mon brave; Sergeant Cameron, sir, serve the men out an allowance of this liquor. The captain orders it."

"As I was telling you," continued Ensign Altamont de Montdidier, "the captain and myself, having divided our power, I took

to the mountain tops, while he trod the flats below. If the man, as Goodman Delver expounds it, go to the water and drown himself, it is, will he nill he, he goes, mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Now, our friend M'Kilt hath been, (according to his own account) since he first donned the red rag, nine times across the Atlantic. He hath suffered shipwreck three several times in the Indian Ocean, and was once cast away like Robinson Crusoe on an uninhabited island. Storm and siege, and all the extremities of war hath he endured, and even borne surgery bravely. Yet was he last night all but drowned in a puddle here. He suffered himself to be surrounded by the waters of this flood and with his men was nearly swept away. I brought him off with his drum. No matter how, here he is. My service to you, M'Kilt.

"In short, sir, we were completely washed out of Strathdon, and the shelties which carried our camp equipage drowned. We therefore have been fain to keep higher up in our attempt at reaching the Castle of Bræmar, should it yet remain to us. The cheil who is endeavouring to guide us safely thereto advertised us of this bothie, and we have, as you see, surprised, captured it, and made your acquaintance. M'Kilt, my excellent friend, I think time is up. Sergeant Bendochie, order the drum to beat up, and fall in. We have a long march before us, and a flooded country; if we are to find out Bræmar, we must find it out to-night. We have, you see," continued he, "indeed, come to the end of our tether. There's no more corn in Egypt. Our wallets are now empty, so is the whisky bottle."

The detachment, accordingly, quickly got under arms, and were told off; the rolling drum and the skirl of the pipes was carried far away on the rushing winds; and the Highlanders, looking, amidst the majestic scenery in which they marched, a mere crawling handful of insects, wended their way towards the forest of Bræmar.

The march was not unattended with danger; the floods were terrific, many lives had been lost, and much property destroyed. Ensign Altamont was, however, a youth of extraordinary resources and perseverance. Baffled at one spot, he was only the more determined to achieve a passage at another. Montrose could not have done it better; and spite of the fury of the elements, he carried M'Kilt and his power without the loss of a single man, safe to Bræmar.

The castle of Bræmar, with its small turrets at the angles, resembling pepper-boxes, its loop-holed wall, and its windows which had been carefully secured in old times by stanchions of iron, (crossing each other athwart and end-long, like the grates of a prison,) and its Highland sentinels before the gates, was as like the castle of Darnlinvarach, in the legend of Montrose, as one pea is like unto another.

Since the rebellion of '45 (as far as I could learn) it had not been used for the reception of men of war, until the present de-

tachment, some few months before, was ordered there for the purpose of aiding the civil power in the prevention of illicit whisky brewing. It was a vast, cold, tombstone-looking building, appearing, as you gazed upon it from the hills around, like some huge mausoleum erected in the pass. Its principal apartment was large; and, having only the simple appointments of a small barrack-room, namely, two chairs and one table, placed in the midst before the huge cavernous chimney, it had a most chilly and comfortless appearance. Ensign Altamont de Montdidier had, however, partially rendered it more habitable, with the only means in his power; for he had pitched a tent in its centre, beneath whose protecting canvas the furious winds which blew around the apartment were not much more felt by the occupiers than if they had tenanted a windmill.

It was in the night when we at length reached the castle. Jaded and spent with toil, the detachment was glad to gain its shelter, since the fury of the elements amounted to something dreadful to encounter on the hills; whilst the terrific deluge which was sweeping through the region filled the minds of men with feelings of awe and dread. Every bridge between our stronghold and the sea had been either blown up, or washed into the roaring waters; and many thought the last day had arrived. Buildings were levelled, cottages carried away, enormous trees uprooted, cattle lost, and many poor peasants drowned in sight of their friends, who could render them no assistance. And still the waters were on the increase.

Meanwhile Altamont, M'Kilt, and myself, sat ourselves before the roaring fire, in the vast apartment which had been appropriated as a mess-room in this Highland castle; and amidst the villanous compound of horrible sounds which whistled, shrieked, and bellowed in the air without, we held converse, smoked our havannahs, and quaffed potations of whisky-toddy.

The scene was altogether new to me, and not unamusing. A huge log of pine, big enough for the yule log on a Christmas hearth in the olden time, blazed before us, giving a degree of comfort within; whilst all that was terrible sounded in the forest without.

The winds, indeed, sounded like the continuous rush of some mighty cataract; the waters of the foaming Dee formed a roaring second; the chimney piped and groaned in concert. Lamentations and strange screams of death were heard in the air; and the sentinels, calling to each other "with dire yell," and naming the progress of the night every quarter of an hour, added to the discord.

Two more extraordinary beings than the companions I had thus fallen in with it would have been difficult to have found, I should think. The one, all fire, spirit, and liveliness; the other, as slow, quizzical, and torpid.

Altamont, on doffing his regimentals, in order to take his ease after the march, had thrown on an elaborately embroidered and spangled tunic, which had served him to play the part of the

haughty, gallant, gay Lothario, during some recent private theatricals in the last quarters they had come from; consequently he looked, as he sat imbibing his whisky-punch beneath the ample chimney-piece, a sort of Sir Piercy Shafton. M'Kilt, on the contrary, with a red night-cap on his head, an old and long-skirted morning-gown upon his body, and spectacles on nose, looked more like the spectre of some withered alchemist of old, than a man of this world. Two persons, indeed, more opposite in disposition perhaps never were thrown together; yet, strange to say, they felt a degree of friendship for each other, such as is seldom experienced amongst the gentlemen of the blade.

Altamont, by his every action, would have proclaimed himself a shallow and eccentric fop. There was a levity in which it was his pleasure to indulge, which made him so slightly regarded, that what he said and did was neither heeded nor thought of but as the inconsiderate deed of a trifling person. With all this, however, there was an under-current. It seemed as if he was master of everything, could pierce through the designs of others in a moment; and was in fact an exceedingly clever fellow: and yet, although you lived under the same roof with him for a twelve-month, you might have failed in finding this out. He made himself enemies wherever he went—that delighted him; and yet he was every man's friend at heart. He professed to scorn the world. "Society," he said, "was poisonous, even in its smallest portions, most carefully, most scrupulously selected;" and yet, when an actor in the scene, it was delightful to be within the scope of his joyous influence. Conscious of his superiority over the generality of his fellow-mortals, he was the last to presume upon it, or be dissatisfied with the companionship he happened to be thrown amongst; and he could always, he affirmed, extract amusement and instruction from the veriest clodpole of the village.

M'Kilt again, although in his withered and wild attire "he scarce looked an inhabitant of the earth," was a most estimable man, and in everything a soldier and a gentleman. Beneath all his singularity, coldness, and quietude of manner, he owned a soul of great magnitude; and, although it took much to arouse his Highland blood, when once chafed or insulted nothing but blood would have washed out the wound.

After the fatigues of our march, and the storm we had encountered, the port we had reached seemed doubly pleasant. The captain's serving-man, performing the office of cook and waiter, dressed us a mess of red deer venison, boiled a kettle of water, poured out a fragrant cup of tea, poached a round dozen of new-laid eggs, and made a shake-down for me beneath the tent in the centre of the apartment; and we gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of the hour—

"The storm without might roar and rustle;
We did na mind the storm a whistle."

"When you mentioned your name, my good sir," said Altamont, "in yonder bothie, I was so taken up with matters appertaining to that action, that in truth I hardly marked it; and during the troubles of our march hither, although we have become most excellent allies, we have had other things to think of, than inquiring into each other's titles and armorial bearings."

I knew enough of the world to suspect that the knowledge of my name and circumstances would be more likely to poison the comfort of the party, than to add to our conviviality. I had begun to forget my misfortunes in the enjoyment of the society of this eccentric pair; the query, however, although it "stopped the career of laughter with a sigh, required an answer."

Altamont saw my confusion as I told it, and in an instant guessed the circumstances of my recent trial. His superciliousness of manner immediately left him, and he redoubled his attention and kindness; whilst M'Kilt, who was also in so much master of my story as the recent proceedings of the court-martial had published to the world, likewise overwhelmed me with civility. It was enough that I was unfortunate, with these men: not place nor greatness, nor any power upon earth, would have made them offer me the most trifling slight when once they became acquainted with my story.

"Fie, what a night is this!" said Altamont, rising, and walking to the window. "The genius of the storm rides on the posting winds; both current and ripple are dancing in light here. The castle is surrounded by water. M'Kilt, we're like a colony of beavers in their lodge: *ergo*, we shall be drowned."

M'Kilt whistled, rose from his seat, and walked to the window. The moon gave a dubious light, and all around looked like the sea.

"Best rouse the men aloft," said he; "I'll call the drummer."

"To what end?" returned Altamont. "They cannot escape; we must await the event. Let *them* sleep whilst *we* watch. Yet stay; I will relieve the sentinels without the walls, lest they die like Romans—upon their posts."

The castle was erected upon a green mound, around whose base towards the north, at ordinary times, the river Dee was wont to glide. Now, however, the course of the Dee was lost sight of in the overwhelming torrent, which, sweeping through the entire pass, encroached to the very walls of the castle, and seemed to threaten its foundation.

The accumulating tide, in fact, poured through the grated loopholes, filled the dungeons and lower regions of the building, and rising higher and higher every hour, at length the grey building looked like some sea-built tower amid the waters.

It was an anxious night. The detachment, quartered in the upper apartments of the building, slept soundly after their toilsome march. The court of guard was necessarily removed from the outer walls of the building, and the men, withdrawn up the winding staircase, looked anxiously upon the dark waters as

they reflected the light they carried, as if from the bottom of a well.*

The situation, indeed, of the soldiery, thus cut off from all intercourse and assistance, was not enviable; as, independently of the chance of drowning, there was a probability that they might starve.

Altamont had ordered the guard to bear up all the provisions from below, as soon as he discovered the continued rise of the flood; and he now carefully watched and marked the progress of its encroachment. The sergeant of the guard, meanwhile, came in from time to time, with a branch of flaming pine in his hand, to report the progress of the water up the castle stairs inch by inch, just as a sailor heaves the lead at sea, and sings out its depth.

"Does it still mount, sergeant?" said Altamont, as the former, flambeau in hand, stood upon the steps below, looking into the dark pool, like a man about to step into a cold bath.

"It does, sir," returned the non-commissioned officer; "but it has taken half a minute more in getting up this last step than it has done in walking over the others."

"What's the hour, sergeant, by your watch?" inquired the officer.

"Five, sir," said the sergeant.

"It's time the *réveille* sounded, then," said the officer; "and there it goes."

Accordingly the loud beat of an unbraced sheepskin, rattling and rolling a few feet above our heads, soon drummed in the ears of the sleeping soldiery, and the heavy tread of between fifty and sixty individuals, rushing from their beds, was quickly added to the clamour.

If the reader has never heard an infantry brass drum beaten, as a British drummer can and will beat it, and that too under the same roof with himself, accompanied by the screaming skirl of a Highland bagpipe, and the piercing squeal of the wry-necked fife, he can have no conception of the sound which now disturbed "the curtained sleep" of Captain M'Kilt's power. Nothing, indeed, as I said before, interferes with the discipline of the British soldier; and the duty goes forward amidst storm and wreck, as steadily as amidst fire and siege.

Here, accordingly, cooped up in a solitary tower, cabined, confined, and surrounded by the roaring waters, the business of the day commenced with the same regularity as though nothing extraordinary was taking place. Indeed, it was not a little edifying to contemplate that system by which men could be kept in order, and made to sit down and break their fasts at the roll of the drum, put their barrack-rooms in trim, accoutre themselves, and fall in,

* During this tremendous flood, Bræmar Castle was garrisoned by a detachment of the King's Own Borderers (25th), to which party the author was attached, and had an opportunity of observing its terrific violence.

enranked along the upper apartments of a building, whose foundation and ground-floor were inundated by an encroaching flood; their situation being like that of men wrecked upon a desert sand, who look to be washed off the next tide.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Hitherto, this appears to be one of the most extraordinary families that ever man of quality marched into."

"Sir Tunbilly, I shall now quit thy den; but while I retain the use of my senses, I shall ever remember thou art—a dem'd horrid savage."

TRIP TO SCARBOROUGH.

UNDER the circumstances I have mentioned in the preceding chapter, was I first made acquainted with Captain M'Kilt, and his no less eccentric subaltern; and such was my first night in the castle of Bræmar.

Luckily the waters, shortly after the réveille and turn out of the garrison, began to subside, though it was many days before we were able to set foot on the greensward upon which the building stood; and long will it be before that flood is forgotten in the north. I spent some weeks with my generous and kind-hearted friends, and then prepared to take leave of them. Altamont, now that the country was getting more passable, proposed to himself a short leave of absence, and invited me to accompany him on a visit he intended to make to the residence of a Scotch laird to whom he had letters of introduction. I endeavoured to excuse myself, as I felt diffident at making new acquaintances in my present situation. He, however, overruled my objections, and we agreed to undertake the expedition together.

As Rakehelly Hall was not above thirty miles from Bræmar, after taking leave of the excellent M'Kilt, we set forth with knapsacks on our backs, containing a change of clothing, early one morning, to reach it on foot.

The roads, in the direction we traversed, were in many places so completely destroyed by the recent floods, that they looked like deep trenches, scooped out by an invading army: whilst, on every side, were to be observed devastation and ruin amidst the slimy deposit of the subsiding tide.

We reached the woods of Rakehelly late at night; just, indeed, as the laird and his friends were beginning the diversions and revels it was their humour to indulge in. The house was a castellated mansion, apparently, as we looked at it from the distant hill, rearing its white turrets from the midst of a hanging forest of enormous pines: though in reality it stood in the midst of an open park of some extent, filled with deer.

It was one of those lovely spots, to look on which necessarily

takes the imagination of the gazer back to more romantic and stirring days. As the blue smoke ascended above the tops of the forest trees, and the turrets, silvered in the moonlight and embosomed in the massive wood, met our admiring gaze, we stopped to think upon some of the deeds of gallantry which the legendary lore of the neighbourhood attached to the family of the chieftain who owned the estate.

The sharp and continued report of fire-arms was distinctly heard as we stood upon the hill-top and contemplated the house.

"The muckle laird of Rakehelly is an eccentric and half-crazy being, I have heard," said Altamont. "Indeed, I have been repeatedly warned against this visit we are making, as he is at times said to be almost dangerous in his liveliness of disposition. A sor' of fellow who stands to no repairs. He turns night into day, too; rising with the owl, and going to bed with the lark. Can he be indulging in the sports of the field, like the wild huntsman in *Der Freischutz*? *N'importe*, we shall soon see."

Accordingly we descended the hill we were upon, and, diving into the thick pine forest at its base, after a couple of miles gained the park, ascended another mile of wood, and entered the opening in front of the house.

A mound was thrown up before the large bay-window of the parlour, which, although we saw a glare of light beyond, hindered us from observing the employment of the persons whose repeated shots were evidently proceeding from within the apartment.

Warned by one or two bullets whistling past our ears, we stopped, and, making a *détour*, reached the stone steps which led to the fore-door of the mansion. Here we were met by several keepers with torches in hand, who, on Altamont announcing his name, ushered him into the dining-room amidst the assembled party, who were just at that moment recreating themselves after breakfast in their own peculiar fashion.

I was considerably struck by the oddness of the scene. A long table, covered with the remains of this midnight breakfast, stood in the midst of the ample room, at which lounged several of the guests. Others were seated in the deep embrasure of the bay-window which looked out upon the park, and continually loaded and fired into the mound I have described. Each man blazing away at his own target, above and around which were suspended various lighted lanterns.

It was, indeed, a curious party; but the host beat them all hollow, both in appearance and style. He sat upon a raised seat at the head of his table, on which, as I said, the breakfast equipage still remained, mixed up with pistols, rifles, fowling-pieces, powder-flasks, bullets, and other matters appertaining. Wine there was, too, of every description, from sparkling hock to imperial tokay, together with spirits of all sorts, liqueurs, and a case of cigars standing on one side of the room, big as a seaman's chest.

The host was a short, thin, weasel-faced man, with pointed features, a red shock head of hair, a little cane-coloured beard, and

a laughing, mischievous, restless eye. So fidgetty was he withal, that he could scarcely sit still for a moment, but kept darting about in his chair, and shifting his position, as if he was afflicted with St. Vitus's dance.

His conversation, which came by fits and starts, was accompanied by a solitary laugh, which preceded and ended everything he said and did, and was quite startling at times. For instance, if he darted suddenly forward and helped himself but to the "rough, tough leg of an old moor fowl," he always preluded the action by a joyous "ha!" And if he addressed any of the attendants or guests, he always preceded it with a loud "ho!"

It was his pleasure to be thought sometimes an eastern sultan, sometimes a Roman emperor; on which occasions he was as magnificent in his entertainments as Marc Antony himself. At others he professed himself a sort of high-priest, and delighted in fancying his companions were a brotherhood of the same order with himself. When such ideas held him, he was not so hospitable. In fact, he was very mad at times, and exceedingly dangerous, when not in a pleasant temper.

His amusement was to help load the pistols with which his friends fired, and hold the stakes, and occasionally, as he sat, to let fly at any object on the walls of the room that hit his fancy at the moment. Consequently the portraits of his ancestors, and the various other paintings which adorned the apartment, were riddled with shot, and every part of the walls and ceiling filled with bullet-marks, as closely as the walls of the birth-place of Shakspeare, at Stratford-upon-Avon, are with the names of the pilgrims who have visited the shrine.

"Ho!" shouted the host, with a loud and startling effort, pointing his withering forefinger at Altamont the moment he entered. "Ho! who the deuce are you?"

"Mind what you are at here," said Altamont aside to me, "or you'll get an accidental bullet through your brain. The thing has happened before to-night. Most high, most mighty, and most puissant Cæsar," he continued, doffing his bonnet, and walking up to the laird, "I bear a sealed brief from your ally, Lord Cœur de Lion. A missive of introduction to your court here:—peruse the firman, Eccellenza."

"Ha!" said the laird, poising the pistol he had just loaded in his right hand, and biting the tip of the forefinger of his left, as his rolling eye glanced from Altamont to myself, in a sort of insane doubt as to what we really were, and what we really wanted in his hall of state; for having been twice put into confinement, he was extremely jealous of strangers mixing amongst his party, or entering his house, and the chances were, if he suspected us as inquisitors, he would be likely to give us the benefit of his weapon.

"Ha!" said he, after seizing the letter Altamont offered him, throwing it upon the table, and putting his elbow upon it, whilst he leaned forward and gazed intently from one to the other.

"Lord Cœur de Lion, said ye; good! Fraternal friends and holy brothers," he continued, calling to the sporting gentlemen assembled, and who were all apparently as mad as himself, "draw to the table here, and fill a chalice for the nonce. A welcome to my new friends here! Gentlemen, you're both welcome in a loving cup. Here's dirt and ashes, mortality, misery, and vicissitude to us all!"

After drinking this toast, the glasses were all dashed over head, and, the pistollers returning to their vocation, the match (which was for a large amount) proceeded; and blaze away over the bridge, was all the rage for the next two hours at least.

The assemblage were, as I said, for the most part men of habits as eccentric as the host himself; men who, in lending themselves to his humours during their visit at Inchkeithing, and following his insane and reckless style, in some sort followed the bent of their own inclinations. They occasionally called themselves the infernals, and constituted a sort of club, which met once a-year at the Hall of Rakehelly; the laird whereof was perpetual head-sinner, chief devil, or master of the revels; and it being a case of follow-my-leader whilst the meeting lasted, their freaks and hare-brained deeds were the astonishment of the whole country side. The club consisted of twenty members, all out-and-out devils, and there was no allowance of adding to their number; neither could any persons be admitted to their society, except through the introduction of one of themselves. Indeed, they had played some rather queer and rough jokes upon one or two persons who had sought to mingle in their exclusive society.

About a dozen out-and-outs were at present at this gathering. Some of them were Scotchmen, one or two Irish, and some Englishmen. A hare-brained and reckless brotherhood, although gentlemanly in style and manner, as a matter of course—being all of them of the higher class of society: only, perhaps, somewhat too boisterous, all of them having rather more brandy than brains in their heads at the present moment. Gamesters they were, because that is the varnish of a complete man of the world; and philosophers they professed themselves, because they doffed the world aside, and bid it pass—taking no heed of time but by its loss.

Their substitution of the night for the day was the least of their eccentricities, that being frequently done by the fashionable world during a London season. These worthies, however, professed to enjoy the sports of the field during Phœbe's reign, with more zest than they could whilst bright Phœbus glared upon their deeds. The laird himself, who had, as I said, been twice confined in an asylum, had done so, indeed, for years; and the meeting of the society only lasting for six weeks, the members were content for that time to make the exchange in order to meet his taste.

At the present time, then, the sweepstakes having been decided, the party proceeded to follow their diversions according to the rules and regulations of their host. They were allowed one

hour's rattling of the bones, stakes *ad libitum*, only they must be held by the laird.

Next came, moon permitting, a horse-race, there being a regular race-course in the park. Then came the principal meal, served in the great hall at two o'clock, in feudal style, the principal personages sitting according to their rank, and the retainers at a lower board. After this, otter hunting, salmon-spearing, rabbit-shooting, together with whatever diversions suited the weather and the season, were followed up, until supper was served, about day-break.

Such was the custom of the Friars of Inchkeithing. Their society lasted for about three years, at the end of which period its members were for the most part *hors de combat*.

To return, however, to the present diversions; a horse-race was the first thing in rotation. The moon shone out brightly, and the whole country around was silvered in her rays. The horses were excellent, and the stakes high, each man riding his own horse.

Then came a regatta, with flat-bottomed boats, which the opponents were to row or propel in any way they possibly could up a rapid in the river Don, which ran through Inchkeithing park. One member had already been drowned in attempting the feat, and no man had ever yet achieved it, simply because it was impossible. After this trial, in which those who made the effort got a good ducking for their pains, the feast was served, and the fraternal friends quaffed their potations with a devotion worthy of the monks of old; these, after shouting and singing like a regular crew of bacchanals, finished their orgies by ordering their steeds to the door, for a sort of midnight parade, and moonlight scour over the country. Accordingly, horses being provided for Altamont and myself, the whole party mounted and set forth on a headlong expedition, in which Mandeville, the laird, being the leader, the devil for the hindmost was the order of the course.

They soon cleared the precincts of the park, scampered through the little hamlet, frightening the inhabitants from their sleep, and the whole village from its propriety, by their shrieks and bacchanalian outcries. They then galloped through the pine forest beyond, and, racing over the waste moorland, held onwards towards the hills.

After galloping along the hill-tops for some distance, they at length drew bridle, and, leaping from their panting steeds, picketed them, and, throwing themselves upon the heather beside a mountain rivulet, watched for the first streaks of dawn; as soon as it appeared, they once more mounted, formed in a line upon its ridge, and commenced a steeple-chase home again, in comparison with which all the races of the sort that ever were run, were, I should think, but flat and stale.

By miracle, all the party in this instance, at some time or other during the next day, got safe home; but half their horses were totally ruined. Two had their backs broken, and two more were,

like Fitzjames's steed, left amongst the crags as food for the Highland eagle.

Altamont and myself managed to reach Rakehelly Hall soon after Mandeville and his companions, when we partook of supper at day-break; and having seen enough of their eccentricities, when the host retired to his couch to sleep off the fatigues of his midnight revel, we took our leave, and wended our way towards the south.

It was delightful to travel in the companionship of so agreeable a companion as my new friend. We were in the land of romance; and having been for some time stationed in the Highlands, he knew the neighbourhood well.

“Nor rock nor glen we paced along,
But had its legend and its song.”

When we reached the main road, our destinations necessarily lay in different directions. He was due at his detachment, and it would need his utmost speed of walking, if he meant to reach it before nightfall. My destination it would have been more difficult to decide upon at that moment, but I professed an urgent desire to reach the gude town of Aberdeen, some seventy miles southward from where we then were.

Altamont tried all his powers of persuasion to induce me to return with him and remain longer at Bræmar; but I felt unwilling to do so, and determined to box the road, and take my chance towards the south. I felt a secret longing to be alone, and ponder upon my situation, and consider what was the best course for me to pursue. Relatives I had none that I knew much of, or cared for; certainly, none who felt the most remote interest in my fate. My thoughts still harped, however, upon my father. I felt a great desire to hear something of him, although I resolved to starve and die piecemeal, rather than ask assistance from him, after his unkind behaviour. England seemed to be, therefore, my most proper destination, and I resolved to reach it, as soon as I conveniently could. For the first time in my life, I felt the value of money; and the poor hundred pounds I carried in my pocket, I wisely considered my only earthly friend.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

“What, what, what? ill luck, ill luck?”

“Why, thou loss upon loss! The thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no ill luck stirring, but what lights o’ my shoulders.”

SHAKSPERE.

“FAREWELL, then,” said Altamont; “since you will no longer sojourn pleasantly amongst the green retreats of Bræmar with us,

and doff the world aside in the Highlands, I suppose we must part here. I shall, however, trust to meeting you in the great metropolis, when I am relieved from exile and detachment."

"It would give me more pleasure so to do," I returned, "than I shall say here, or you believe. But, indeed, I rather hope we may not do so. The best wish M'Gregor can give his friends, is that he may see them no more."

"Tush—tush!" returned Altamont. "You look upon the dark side of things. *N'importe*: I shall be up in London soon, and I'll see you the instant I arrive, and never leave you till I have put you in a position to laugh at your enemies, and set you right with those you love."

"You will scarcely be able to accomplish that, I fear," I returned; "but only lose your own position in society in the attempt. It is one thing, Altamont, to befriend a man and become his associate upon the misty mountain-tops, or within the walls of Bræmar; but it is another, my friend, to walk with him down St. James's-street, and cram him down the throats of your acquaintance in the great metropolis."

"And do you, then, class me amongst those insects of the season, those *figurantes* of the ball-room, the grinning sycophants of the supper-hour, the *débris* of the season, those spiritless waterflies, who, without one attribute in nature to recommend them, gibbet themselves upon some person of rank and authority in the world, and, sunned in the eye of fashion, fear almost to walk upon their mother earth unadvisedly, lest they lose their place in the station they cling to? Dost think I fear the look of such cold shadows as these? No, my good fellow; I have said it, and I'll do the thing I promised. Be thou but guided by me, and I will bring you through your difficulties. Go according to your own headstrong ideas, and deeper ruin stares you in the face than that which you have achieved. Take my advice; return with me to Bræmar, write to your father instantly, and state your situation; by the time you get your answer, my leave of absence will have arrived."

It was in vain Altamont endeavoured to persuade me to return with him. I felt even his society irksome to me; and, promising to write my address in London, we parted.

Those who have never wandered upon the mountains in Scotland and visited these lonely habitations, far out of the reach of the mere traveller, can have no idea of the solitude and beauty of their situation. The glen I had traversed for some miles realized Scott's description of Glendear'd; and when, on turning the base of the dark hill, the little habitation appeared far away in the distance before me, the streamlet running beneath the green hillock it was erected upon, with the mountains piled in awful grandeur all around, I almost expected to see Dame Glendinning herself come forward to welcome me.

The sun was setting as I reached the cottage, and I paused to observe the beauty of the lone and somewhat desolate spot in

which it stood. It was precisely one of those out-of-the-way residences, where, in days of strife and fierce contention, a proscribed outlawed chieftain, or knot of prick-eared whigs, might have been concealed from the pursuit of their savage foes. It had but barely escaped the destruction so many cottages thus situated had met with during the recent floods; for the ascent it stood on was in some parts completely undermined by the sweeping torrent, whilst many of the little cultivated patches, where the water had passed over them, were devastated and covered with torn-up heather, roots of trees, mud, and slime.

Finding no one to greet me without, I passed through the little mill yard, and entered the cottage. The peat reek was welcome to my nostrils, as it spoke of rest and refreshment, and in truth I needed both after my somewhat toilsome walk. I found no one else, however, within the cottage, but an elderly female, who was knitting and singing beside the turf fire.

A sort of hood was drawn over her grey locks; and altogether more hideous-looking hag it had never before been my fate to encounter.

As I advanced into the interior, she glanced round and saw me, and jumping up with more alacrity than from her age I could have supposed her capable of, she immediately confronted me.

She was evidently not the gude wife of the cottage, and I at first took her for one of those demented creatures, who are still to be found wandering on the Highlands, speering fortunes, and chanting old ditties in the ingle neuk, for eleemosynary scraps, and the night's lodging, which the simple cottagers would think it ill-luck to refuse them.

"Fat divil do we want with meelitary men or gaugers here," said she, quickly, as she stared into my face.

"Who told you, my good woman," said I, "that I was either one or the other?"

"Bræmar," said she, quickly. "Ye're frae Bræmar. Ye're ane o' the officers. Ye've been watched to the Hall. How came ye here, in the deil's name? Follow me out, if ye're wise."

She glided from the cottage, as another female entered from an inner apartment. I immediately altered my intention of following her, and addressed myself to this person, who, I rightly concluded, was the wife of the proprietor of the place. She was a sulky-looking and ill-favoured individual; and to my request for some refreshment, after telling her whither I was bound, and the long walk I had had since morning, she deigned me no other answer than that of placing bannocks, milk, and a lump of mouldy cheese before me.

"Your miles are long, my good madam," said I, "and the country much cut up. Can you give me a night's lodging in your pleasant cottage?"

"Na," said she, sulkily, "we've no that accommodation for the likes o' ye."

At this moment, and as I was finishing my meal, the old, daffy boddie returned, and, resuming her seat, began to warble another of her old ballads.

She evidently wished to draw my attention towards her; for as I turned, while the ill-favoured hostess looked another way, I observed her making secret signs for me to leave the cottage. Accordingly, somewhat struck with her manner, although I had intended half an hour's rest, and (if I could have obtained accommodation) a night's lodging, I arose and offered to remunerate the crabbed landlady.

She, however, refused the coin I offered her, though something more civilly. "Hout na!" said she. "It was na worth the quarter o' that. I was quite welcome; they did na tak siller frae travellers: they seldom came that way, and when they came her's was no inn."

As I nodded to the weird sister, in quitting the cottage, she pointed significantly with her choppy finger, in the direction I had just traversed, as if warning me to return. I, however, paid no attention to her actions, made no further inquiry, and although for the first few paces I thought the circumstance rather singular and the Highland hospitality I had received somewhat constrained, I shouldered my burden, and, like Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress," went onwards on my way. The shades of evening were now descending fast, the hills were wrapped in deeper brown, and the breeze sighed along the glen I traversed in a melancholy and dreary style, that would have been quite delightful to a lover of the wild poetry of the bard Ossian.

As the glen was thus lonely, and I had still some five miles before I came upon any other habitable spot, I plucked a stout stake from amongst some hurdles before I quitted the precincts of the little farm. The warning action of the old woman had for the moment struck me, and I felt that something in the shape of a weapon in hand would be both companionable and perhaps useful.

The path I traversed ran along the margin of the streamlet, turning and winding between the hills; and to my surprise, as soon as I had wound my way around the base of the first hill beyond the cottage, I found my weird and withered friend had cut nearly across it, and was in waiting before me beside the burn.

"Did I no warn ye not to tak this road?" she said, as soon as I came up. "Did I not sign to ye no to gang further up the glen?"

"And wherefore not, my good woman?" said I.

"There's danger in your path," she returned.

"Who will injure me?" I inquired. "Robbery is almost unknown in your country; and for myself I fear nothing. I have injured no one; why should I?"

"You have eaten of the bread, and drunk of the cup of those you have injured but now," returned the beggar.

"Whose bread have I eaten, foolish woman," I inquired, "that you can allude to?"

"Yonder woman's," returned the hag, pointing back to the cottage. "Ye have imprisoned her husband and her son with yer cursed sodgering; burned their bothies, and wasted the gude liquor in the streams. Ye have clean ruined them a'tegether."

"If you allude to the capture of some smugglers upon the hills, beyond Toumantoul, I have had as much to do with that as you have. I was captured amongst the lot."

"Are ye not frae Bræmar?" said she, impatiently, "and have ye not been away at that daft Mandeville's place there in Donside? Ye ken ye have, for I saw ye at Bræmar. Gang not down the glen," she continued; "I'se tell ye fairly, there's them been out speering for ye these twa days, that winna spare ye."

"Ridiculous!" said I; "what have I to do with the people here? I never burnt a bothie in all my life."

"A-weel, a-weel, ye mun do as ye like. Be ye ane of the garri-son or not, ye're kenned and marked, and they winna be pleased to see ye again where the still's at work, that's a'. Dinna say ye na na been forewarned."

So saying, the old dame turned upon her heel, and returned towards the cottage.

I cannot say that I altogether relished this warning, when I came to reflect upon it as I pursued my way. It was not impossible that, from having been with Altamont and M'Kilt deer-shooting in the forest, I might have been recognised and identified as one of the officers.

My way still lay along the side of the streamlet, which had now become much shallower and wider, its pebbly bottom not a foot from the surface. A rustic bridge had been here erected, but was now broken, nothing but the piles here and there remaining to tell of its sometime whereabouts.

Somewhere about a mile from these fragments, I had been directed by Altamont to bear off to the right; and a mile further, he told me, would bring me to a small public-house, where I might obtain a bed for the night.

I began to congratulate myself upon the near termination of my journey, when, on casually turning my head, I found myself followed by three men, who, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, were hastening along the path I had traversed. From their manner, I instantly knew they were in pursuit. They were running when I first saw them, but broke into a walk as soon as they saw me stop and regard them.

The only chance left me was to push on, and, actually running, I walked on as fast as I possibly could.

The rivulet again narrowed, and ran between precipitous banks, the path ascending on the right-hand bank. As I hastened up it, a slight turn for the moment hid them from my view, and I was beginning to deliberate with myself whether there would be any

degradation in trusting to my heels, three to one being great odds, when I found the path in front also occupied; two men quietly stepping from the rocky ascent which overhung it, and standing not twenty yards before me.

There was small time for deliberation, and a hundred years of thought would only have brought me to the conclusion I arrived at the moment I caught sight of them. Whether I escaped or not, my only chance was to charge the opposing force.

The demeanour of the two ruffians in my path was sufficient to advertise me that they meant mischief. They stood doggedly before me, so that I could not possibly get past. Each man had a stout cudgel. I walked steadily on till I came within about six yards, and then, taking the heel of my hedge-stake into the palm of my right hand, and grasping it as a soldier holds his musket and fixed bayonet in my left, I sprang upon the fellow more immediately opposing me, and driving the point into the pit of his stomach with considerable force, he was *hors de combat* before he could effectually strike a blow. Both, however, had levelled tremendous blows as I dashed at them, but my activity had thus been the means of my eluding their cudgels; and, instantly turning upon the remaining ruffian, I was just upon the point of driving him backwards into the stream, when I was felled to the earth by a heavy blow upon the back of my head.

I was, however, only stunned for the moment, and, conscious that I was now completely in the power of my enemies, I had the sense to remain perfectly quiet whilst they ransacked my pockets and possessed themselves of my pocket-book, containing nearly all I possessed in the world—my poor hundred pounds.

As soon as they found it, three out of the four arose from their stooping posture and examined its contents.

“Curse the fellow!” said the man whose comrade I had floored, “he has fairly done for Murdoch, I think; the poor chap’s bleeding from the mouth and nose like a pig.”

“We’ve fairly stunned the cheil, however,” said another fellow, whose knee was upon my breast. “Best toss him into the burn before he comes to; he’ll sink like a stane.”

“Na, na, that winna do ava,” returned the other: “that might tell tales of us. Draw yer knife, mon, across his weasand, and then we can tak the loon down to the bothie, and bury him.”

I turned sick at the words. To die (as Eugene Aram says) is natural and necessary; but the manner of it is something which should be decent and manly. To be slaughtered thus like a calf by these butchers, was anything but pleasant, and I resolved to demur, and resist the application of the knife to my carotid by every means in my power. Four to one was great odds, however. On my legs I could have been content to fight, like Macbeth, “till from my bones the flesh was hacked,” but to be held down, like a pig upon a shutter, and feel the sharp knife cut through my windpipe, was horrible to contemplate.

Three of the fellows were still engaged hunting amongst the pockets of my book. The ripple of the stream sounded just beneath the bank I lay on, and a sudden thought struck through my brain.

The villain who mounted guard over me relaxed his hold for one moment, as he searched his pocket for the knife which was to cut my thread of life, and kill me like a calf. With a sudden and violent effort, I wrenched myself free from him, and rolling rapidly over before he recovered himself, in the next instant I dropped like a water-rat into the stream.

No shipwrecked mariner ever felt the grateful and cooling freshes of the desert more welcome to his throat, than I felt the cold waters over my body as I plunged into this burn; and allowing myself to sink several feet, I struck out like an otter, for some distance, beneath the stream.

When I rose to the surface, I found my pursuers were as cunning as myself; they were quite awake to the habits of the animal I have mentioned, and knowing, that if I could swim, I must soon rise for air, had run along with the current, and instantly saw me when I reached the surface. It was lucky for me that I was an expert swimmer, as I found I should have a hard struggle for it, if I meant to escape being murdered in mistake.

In my boyhood I had practised diving and swimming under water in the different streams situate near the Grange, and I was, therefore, quite at home in the element; and as soon as I heard the shout which my pursuers gave from the bank, I again allowed myself to sink.

This time, however, I altered my game, and instead of swimming with the stream, I turned beneath the surface, and although I could not stem the swift current, like a trout or a salmon, I kept my head against it, and pulled with might and main, with a half turn, towards the further bank.

The half minute's breath I had taken, had not only showed me that destruction awaited me from my foes, but I distinctly heard the roar of a torrent right a-head, which, together with the rush of the waters which hurried me on, made me conjecture that there was in all probability, either a small cataract near, or some rapids must be at hand. As a last resource, I therefore made for the opposite bank, and completely hidden in its dark overhanging shade, grasping a tuft with one hand, to keep my head above the water, thus out of the force of the current, lay perdue, like a North American savage, listening to the retreating footsteps of his foes.

I found, however, this was a situation I could not long endure. The cold was too great for one not bred in the woods and prairies, and I felt completely numbed. To add to my discomfiture, I found it impossible to land, the water being too deep, and nothing to obtain a grasp of on the bank sufficiently firm to haul myself up on dry land. My only chance, therefore, was to cross, and run the risk of capture. To deliberate, was to drown; I was becoming more benumbed and exhausted every instant, and letting

go my precarious hold, I struck out as strongly as I was now able.

Luckily the rivulet, instead of being in deep pools, as on the side I had quitted, was just at this part gravelly and shelving, and I was enabled, with some little effort, at last to get footing upon dry land.

It is not often the case in the moral north, (in these latter days) that a traveller falls into an ambuscade, and is nearly victimised by such a relentless lot as I was endeavouring to escape from. Scotland is for the most part a quiet land; its remotest lakes, its thicket forests, its mountains and its glens, as safe and secure for the exploration of the stranger, as Hyde Park on a Sunday. In ould Ireland, indeed, it is more common for a red-coat to fall in with fellows who bear the gallows in their features, and murder in their right hands. It was, therefore, my peculiar luck to be thus hunted like a beast of prey, and it jumped, I considered, with the evil fate my destiny always had in store for me.

There were, however, these peculiar features in the case, that these men had been much enraged by the powerful interference of the two detachments lying at Bramar and Corgarff, which had most completely ruined their trade; and, as they considered, in the most unwarrantable manner robbed them of their subsistence. They had, therefore, with the less remorse appropriated my purse, and sought to take revenge upon my person.

As soon as I reached the dry land, I cautiously looked about me; first I thought of climbing the craggy banks which overhung the path, and gaining the hill, attempt to reach Aberlochie, which I knew was not now very far from me.

As I stooped and listened, however, I caught site of the lurid glare of a fire, reflected in the water, not many yards from me. I knew instantly that it proceeded from a whisky bothie, which in my progress down the stream I had passed. With stealthy pace, and so quietly that the blind mole could scarcely have heard my footfall, I approached it, and cautiously looked in. It was empty, and I entered. There were several tattered garments lying about, and hastily stripping off my coat and waistcoat, I made free with one of the ragged great coats I found lying on the floor. This is the great secret in regard to saving oneself from taking cold, after becoming wet through either from rain or immersion in water; namely, to put on a dry garment over the wet one and immediately exercise the body.

Stepping to the door, I again listened, but no sound met my ear. The smugglers were in possession of the path before me, and which, unless I could have landed on the other side the stream, or consented to return the way I came, was the only one I could take, the river being, as I said, on one side, and the steep craigs on the other.

I was fully resolved not to return; and to fight my way through my opponents, was rather too hazardous. The ruffians evidently thought I should make some effort to land, before I reached the

falls. There were several shelving parts of the ascending rocks I had observed, as I cautiously approached the bothie. I resolved to chance concealment, by clambering up one of these, and lie perdue, till the smugglers returned; and not to lose time, I resolved myself to recall them.

Seizing, therefore, a large piece of glowing turf, I threw it into the dry thatch of the bothie, and set it on fire; it was a sort of retaliation which exceedingly pleased me. Then grasping a stout cudgel, which I found lying near, I ran several paces towards the falls, jumped up the ascent, and effectually concealed myself.

The stratagem answered; the bothie sent up a glowing blaze, the whisky taking fire, and I lay in breathless expectation of the result.

The smugglers soon saw the beacon, hastened back, passed the spot in which I lay concealed, and with horrible imprecations upon me, rushed onwards, supposing that I had fled the way I came.

After listening for a few minutes to their retiring footsteps, I seized the opportunity of escape, and leaping down the rocks, with might and main I fled.

Knowing that the lone inn or public, which Altamont had described to me, was in the highway which intersected the footpath I traversed, I quickly passed the salmon leap, in the falls; and now, not thinking my dignity at all compromised after this bad action, by taking to my heels, continued to speed onwards till I reached the high road.

After I had gained about half a mile further, I stopped for a moment to look back, and listen if there was any sound of my pursuers. All, however, was silent; a dancing light shot up ever and anon in the direction of the burning bothie, and beyond that, far away in the distance, was King Richard's bright track yet visible upon the horizon, which "gives token of the goodly day to-morrow."

I was now warm and vigorous; the plunge into the river had, together with the excitement consequent upon my adventure, carried off all my previous fatigue. I was once more solitary upon the moors; but my heart was light to what it had been upon former occasions. I had fought, and all but conquered, and it is wonderful upon what good terms a man feels with himself after doing his devoir like a true knight. Making, therefore, my cudgel play around my head, I hurried forward, and before long a twinkling light threw its beams from afar. Praying heaven that it might not be an "*ignis fatuus*, or a ball of wildfire," I made towards it with might and main, and in a few minutes more I had won the lone public-house.

After battering at the door with as much vigour as the Black Knight at the hermitage of the clerk of Copmanhurst, I succeeded in arousing the old people who tenanted it, and, after some difficulty, gained admittance.

It was but a poor place of refuge I found; for except some eggs,

coarse cheese, and marvellously stale oaten cake, this house of entertainment was all unprovided with viands for the traveller's use. The reason was plain, it was seldom, if ever, visited. The landlord and his auld wife were superannuated, and past work. I, however, was glad of the slight shelter it afforded; and making the outlets as secure as I could, in case my pursuers should discover my place of refuge, and possessing myself of an old rusty fowling-piece, which had apparently graced the walls for half a century, I felt myself tolerably secure, and determined to rest here till dawn, and then put on with all convenient speed.

Making, therefore, a good turf fire, I set myself down to such viands as my host put before me, and then threw myself back in my chair, and, between sleeping and waking, pondered over my situation. With my pocket-book and its contents, all my present store was gone, except some half a dozen shillings I carried in my waistcoat pocket, and my watch. I, therefore, made up my mind to push on for Aberdeen, as well for the purpose of giving information of the robbery to the police there, as also that I might find the few effects I had directed my servant to send from Fort George, and on which, trifling as they were, I was now to depend for support till I could get a supply.

I was now, indeed, in a different situation to any I had ever before been in. Hitherto I had only had those disagreeables to encounter incident to personages moving in the higher sphere of life. Gold, the pale and common drudge "'twixt man and man," I had never contemplated the want of; my means had always been ample for my wants, as far as subsistence went. There were circumstances, also, which had made application for money from my father's agent, extremely unpleasant to me; and the last time I had applied, I had been given to understand that my demands in future were not likely to be honoured.

The fact, therefore, of my becoming suddenly a penniless wanderer in the open world, was sufficiently startling, and stared me in the face, as if the poor hundred pounds I had just been robbed of, had been as inexhaustible as the cap of Fortunatus.

Thank Heaven, however, that buoyancy of spirit which enabled me to surmount all the ills my particular person has been heir to, enabled me to rise above the present ill fortune.

"What am I," said I, "that I should repine at that which my own rashness of temper has brought upon me? Hitherto I have ranked myself above those with whom my lot has been cast, on account of my gentility. I brought myself into difficulties with my comrades of the 145th, by holding them cheap, and estimating myself beyond price, *ergo*, I have been humbled, fallen (I fear) like Lucifer, never to rise again. Away, then, with my gentility," said I, "there is no sign left to show the world I am a gentleman." My name, which had been a knightly and a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer for the Normans, I determined to part with. Through me it had suffered no dishonour; but I seemed now unworthy to bear it. The station in life to which it

had pleased Heaven to call me, I was unable to fill. Be it so; nature hath given me talents, I will use them. The only difficulty was to know what I was most clever in. Having been brought up to no profession, the chances were, that I was unfit for any. All the accomplishments I possessed were utterly useless—not one of them would earn me a shilling. “What, in the name of all the gods at once, is to become of me?” said I. Divested by a multitude of rash acts, of home, friends, and country, unless I could manage to strike out some means of present subsistence, I must either rob or starve.

“Poor is the friendless master of a world,” saith the poet. I was not master of a world, but I was both poor and friendless. At least, it was my pleasure to revel in the idea, that such was the fact. Mine was a case of pride aping humility; and I cast from my mind as offensive the idea of applying to any one for assistance in my present strait. Altamont would have flown to me had I but hinted my mishap. So would M’Kilt. I was not without friends, then; but how could I, however, borrow without the slightest idea when I was likely to be able to repay them. Mrs. Allworthy, too, good soul, if alive, would, I was sure, have received me into her house, and advised with me as to my future career. But, no: I resolved to work for bread, rather than be under obligation to living mortal. “No,” said I, rising and striding across the floor of the little cabin I was cribbed in; “the world hath used me scurvily. I’ll seek for favours from none. To receive them would be bad enough; but to be refused, ye gods! I know not whether the thought most frightens, disgusts, or affronts me. Better beg my food,” I said aloud, throwing myself into an attitude which caused the old host to thrust his head from his berth, and stare with affright, thinking he had a daft body for his guest,

“Or, with a base and boisterous sword, enforce
A thievish living on the common road.”

“Ha! a thought strikes me,” I continued; “by this penniless pocket, ’twere not the worst way. I’ll turn actor for the nonce; and fret my hour upon the stage. As honest Bardolph says, ‘It is a life I do desire: I will thrive.’”

I think it is my Lord Burlington who, in one of his letters to Pope, remarks upon the amusement afforded him in observing the disparity of men from themselves, even in a week’s progress of time. The desultory leaping and catching of new motions, new modes, new measures; and that strange spirit of life (I use his own words) with which men, broken and disappointed, resume their hopes, their solicitations, their ambitions.

It is even so: seated in a mud-walled cottage, and almost penniless, I already began in anticipation to fancy myself the observed of all observers: a very Roscius in Rome. The scenic hour had always been to me one of peculiar enchantment. The veriest strollers that ever ranted in a booth, I had always envied

their hour before the footlights; the idea, therefore, was the more pleasant to me, as it promised to afford me a visible means of existence, and jumped with my humour. Oh! Shakspeare, I fear me you have much to answer for. How many a gawky youth, who might have done his country service at the plough-tail, have thy words of fire sent to rave, recite, and throw his awkward limbs about, and be hissed into madness in a country barn.

As soon as dawn appeared, I prepared to leave the little inn. The hostess crept from out of her berth, and prepared me a mess which she called sowans; and the old hen having deposited an egg, I made a tolerable breakfast. After remunerating the old dame, I grasped my cudgel, and wended my way.

Luckily for me, my foes had spent so much time in seeking for me in the neighbourhood of the farm in the glen, that they thought it unsafe longer to remain near the scene of their robbery; they therefore made the best of their way to Glasgow, as I afterwards heard; whilst I, unmolested, wended on towards Aberdeen, which place I reached late the next night.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

“A poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more.”

“How will this grieve you,
When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that
You thus have published me? Gentle, my lord,
You scarce can right me thoroughly, then, to say
You did mistake.”

SHAKSPEARE.

WHEN I reached Aberdeen, I inquired my way to M'Cray's hotel, where I had ordered my late rear-rank servant, of the 145th, to forward my baggage to, and which I was glad enough to find the faithful fellow had performed. I forthwith located myself there; and for the first time for many nights enjoyed a comfortable bed and refreshing sleep.

It was nigh noon the next day, before I made my appearance in all the comforts of clean linen and my best suit of mufti. As I breakfasted, I was surprised to find what a gay place this northern town was. The fashionables were just then promenading the High-street, which was quite filled with elegantly dressed and lovely females, attended by beaux and cavaliers as smart as themselves.

I had always thought the Scotch were grave and staid folks, both young and old, with an eye to the main chance, and as rigid in manner and conversation as a community of quakers: the old folks, like Douce Davie Deans—the young as serious as

his daughter Jennie. Here, however, the nymphs and swains seemed as fresh and fair, and full of spirit, as the month of May.

As I looked from my window upon the gay scene, the dépôt of the regiment stationed there came sweeping down the street, with their drums and trumpets sounding my hopes. The sight gave me a pang, as I reflected that all my hopes in that profession were gone for ever.

To my surprise, I saw Altamont de Montdidier coming full swing down the street. He seemed to know every party he met, and had something to say to each, whether he knew them or not.

"Ha! my Lord Provost," said he, to a most curious-looking elderly gentleman, dressed something in the style of Nicol Jarvie, a venerable functionary wearing a Ramilies wig, which covered his whole forehead in front; a laced neckcloth, and carrying a most respectable cane behind his back. "Ha! my Lord Provost, what sort of rule do you keep here, in this shire of yours? I have been stopped, robbed, and well-nigh murdered amongst the fastnesses beyond Lochintoidar."

"Heaven be here, man," said the provost; "ye dinna mean that; hout, but it's clear again common sense, yon. Ye're joking. Ye made the giants, and then ye killed them, eh?"

"Not I," said Altamont: "like Ensign Pattypan, I should have been stopped, robbed, and stripped, but that I luckily had fire-arms with me. I'm uneasy about a friend, from whom I parted, the same morning, and I galloped into town from Toumantoul, to ascertain if he has arrived."

"Yer a gude youth, and an extraordinar," said the provost; "I can hear ye well spoken o' in every house I call at. 'Gad, but yer a monstrous favourite of Mistress Macmullain's. What for no come away an' dine wi' us at five, man?"

"It cannot be, Baillie; I've engaged myself this evening to Ducrow. He professes, in his bill, to ride five horses at once. I have betted that I ride ten. All Aberdeen is coming to see it, and you must bring Mrs. Macmullain also."

"I'll surely do that. But ye're a queer chiel! something foolish in these vain matters, but a monstrous favourite o' Mistress Macmullain. Come awa, and tak yer brose wi' huz to-morrow."

"It cannot be, Baillie," said Altamont. "To-morrow I am engaged, also, at the theatre. I am going into the oven with Monsieur Chaubert, the fire-eater, and his leg of mutton."

"Heaven be here! but ye're surely no blate! Yer o'er fond o' these fierce vanities," returned the Baillie, taking a huge pinch of rappee; "and here comes the bonniest lass in the hale kintra side," he continued, bowing as a party of ladies were about to pass; "the Laird o' Aberbirkfeldy's daughter."

"Did I not dance with you in Brabant once?" said Altamont, addressing himself to one of the young ladies, a remarkably handsome and elegant creature.

"Now then," I thought, "I shall hear the northern accent rained upon this impudent youth's head. I shall certainly now hear the 'Fats yer wull' of Lieutenant Bullyman."

I was mistaken: the lady answered quite to the purpose, and in the same language too.

"Did I not dance with *you* at Brabant once?" she said.

"I know you did."

"How needless was it then to ask the question."

Altamont now joined the ladies in the promenade, and was quickly out of sight.

It is not necessary to pursue my story during the short time I remained in the north. In fine, the good Altamont, who had indeed returned post-haste from his detachment in the desire of finding me at Aberdeen, totally failed in dissuading me from my resolution of adopting the stage for a profession, and trying my powers in the company of the first strollers with whom I should fall in. He was, as I said, himself a lover of the drama, fond of amateur performances and one of the most finished actors perhaps upon the stage. He therefore could better forgive the propensity I felt to try my hand upon the boards, although his good sense told him that it could only lead to ruin, being adopted as much out of the spirit of opposition as anything else.

I therefore converted the few articles I possessed of any value into cash; and left in Altamont's hands the task of endeavouring to discover the thieves who had possessed themselves of my pocket-book and its contents. Then in order to be quite in character, I put what things I wanted by way of change into a bundle, sounded the very base string of humility by assuming the name of Mr. Peter Snooks, and started on a promenade towards England.

My journey southward was pleasant enough. I lingered and loitered, like any other dreamer, for days together beside the mouldering tower, the battered keep, and the ruined abbey. I even sometimes passed the night under the trees of the forest, and whilst thus sequestered and alone, amused myself in melancholy musings upon the bygone days, my own blighted hopes, and all the mishaps that had happened to me. I had still some few pounds in my pockets; my wants were few, and I turned my steps from the direct route wherever fancy led me. A draught from the running brook served me in place of more hot and rebellious liquors: like Boniface's ale, I merely fancied it Burgundy, and it was worth ten shillings a quart; and whilst the fresh spring bubbled beside my napkin, and the free birds twittering and chirping, hopped from bough to bough to claim the crumbs I left for perquisites, I eat my solitary meal of bread and cheese thus "under the shade of melancholy boughs," or in any of the cottages I happened to pass in my travels.

Thus I visited many of the places of interest mentioned in Scott's pages, and whilst his magic spell was upon me, and I wandered amidst the hills and valleys he has immortalized, I forgot

for a time the cares of my every-day existence. It seemed indeed indifferent to me how I passed my time, or whither I bent my steps, provided I did but pass it in a sort of oblivion of all pertaining to self. Totally without prospect, there seemed nothing left to me but to get through existence—a dreary waste of years.

Thus I wandered through Perthshire, saw the mist upon the mountain, and heard the night-bird shriek in the country of the McGregors, wandered over the fields of Bannockburn and Flodden, and wended my way through Ettrick and Teviotdale, by

“Tweed’s fair river, broad and deep,
And Cheviot’s mountains lone.”

I then passed over the wilds of Cumberland, and once more approached the more fertile country of Yorkshire.

As I was now fairly quit of my military employment, I hoped never even to see a soldier again. Indeed, the mere falling in with a recruiting party, in a small town I passed through, had brought back so many unpleasant reminiscences, that I generally avoided the most frequented road, and travelled through by-ways and shadowy lanes, having no fixed destination, but still progressed onwards in a tortuous progress, with the great metropolis in my mind’s eye as a halting-place, but with no desire to reach it.

My stock of cash, however, now ran low, and I could not live so cheaply as I managed to do in the north. Moreover, although I might sometimes throw myself upon the greensward before some cottage porch, and play with the little urchins where I purchased my homely meal, yet, in England, as I was compelled generally to seek my bed at the roadside inn, my purse had diminished to the lowest ebb.

One evening, as I entered a little village in Derbyshire, I perceived a man fishing. I was always fond of the sport, and the sight of a brother of the angle was sure to interest me; accordingly I stopped and entered into conversation with him. I found he was the manager of a company of strollers, who were travelling towards Derby. They had halted for the night, he told me, in the village: and he had been to the great house, the residence of Squire Wildhawk, who had given them a bespeak. They were to play in the squire’s drawing-room, before a large company of his friends. The squire had bespoke the play himself; he was a great lover of the immortal bard, and he desired them to play “As you like it.”

“You know, sir,” said the manager, “that Jaques was a character that used to make John Philip Kemble tremble; my heavy-business gentleman is just now extremely unwell, or, between ourselves, he affects it; he lies crafty sick, to-day, at the Checquers, and I must either play the part myself, or we must leave Jaques out of the piece. I am by no means up in the part, and am slow of study, and knowing not what to do, in pure melancholy and troubled brain, I have taken my rod, and come to fish.”

“Make yourself quite easy, sir, on that subject,” I said; “I’ll play Jaques for you.”

"My dear sir, you're surely joking," said the manager; "you're not of the profession."

"I am not," I replied; "but I'll play the character, notwithstanding."

"We play, man, this evening," returned the stroller, "in a couple of hours' time. The rehearsal's over."

"I want no rehearsal," said I; "I know every part in the play."

"This is fortunate, indeed," said the manager. "Now, Mr. Arden, I have ye; 'no more that thane of Cawdor, that Mr. Buttenshaw, shall deceive our bosom's intent:' I discharge Mr. Buttenshaw to-morrow. A specimen, sir, a specimen; 'all the world's a stage,'—speak that speech, I pray you!"

I gave it him, with good emphasis and discretion.

"My good sir," said he, seizing my hand, "you've been joking with me. You are from London; you belong to the profession, and you ask thirty pounds a-week."

I answered him in the negative; and added, I meant to look for an engagement.

"If my poor company will not disgrace your powers," said he, "I shall be happy to engage you."

In short, I enrolled myself in his *corps dramatique*, and made my *début* that night in the drawing-room of Wildhawk Hall: I played Jaques before the squire and his party. The whole affair was not a little curious. Squire Wildhawk was a specimen of the old country squire, long since extinct, a regular roaring, blustering, drinking cavalier. He was a humorist, a would-be wit; and, moreover, a great lover of the drama, considering himself no slight judge of acting. We played as they used to do in the olden time, without the aid of scenery or decorations, in the dining-room, a vast oak-panelled apartment; the audience passing their remarks upon us as we appeared, and criticising us with as little mercy, as Theseus and his court criticised Bully Bottom, Peter Quince, Snout, Starveling, and Flute.

The Squire was an invalid: a fine, portly, fox-hunting, drinking, gouty, old English gentleman; and being unable to walk, he had his great chair wheeled into the room, and a table, with his punch-bowl, his port and his claret, set before him. The lights were arranged across the room at his feet: his family and guests flanked him on either side, and with his pipe in his mouth, he prepared to enjoy his favourite play.

The audience was entirely made up from the party beneath his roof, or belonging to the place. There were his two Hebe daughters, with their intended swains, several ladies and gentlemen staying in the house, and every servant, from the butler to the greasy kitchen wench.

It was the old gentleman's peculiar delight to interrupt everything that was going forward. If he heard a line misquoted, he stopped the performance. If he heard anything that particularly pleased him, he interrupted the scene with as little remorse, in

order to drink to the speaker, and commend him for his elocution.

"A prologue, a prologue; hang me, but I'll have a prologue. To't," he began, as soon as the curtain drew up, and Orlando and Adam appeared, and were about to commence. "Manager, I say, manager, d——n thee, where hast thee hid thyself?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the manager, running in, his points only half-trussed for the senior duke. "I beg your pardon, but there is no prologue to this piece."

"Indeed!" said the squire; "that's all you know about the matter. Here's a pretty fellow, my masters all," he said, turning to the company. "Can't find a prologue to 'As you like it.' D——, I'll give you one myself—one that comes as pat to the purpose as one of Sancho's proverbs."

He accordingly laid down his pipe, ordered the butler to wheel his great chair round, faced the audience, and commenced the prologue to "Pyramus and Thisbe:"

"If these lads offend, it is with their good will.

That you should think, they come not to offend,

But with good will. To show their simple skill,

That is the true beginning of their end."

He then ordered his chair to be countermarched back again, and desired the performance to proceed.

Before the first scene was gone through, however, he had interrupted the performance half-a-dozen times, and read the actors such a lecture, that they found it difficult to play their parts at all.

It was thus the old Squire continued to torment those of the performers who displeased him in their efforts: and sooth to say, being as sorry a set, with one exception, as ever stepped upon the boards, and never having attempted 'As you like it' before, knowing hardly anything of their parts too, they really deserved his censure.

Meanwhile, the audience continued in one roar of laughter from beginning to end of the first scene; whilst the squire, what with twinges of the gout, and the repeated shocks he received at hearing every line of his favourite play misspoken, continued to make such diabolical faces, and utter so many complaints, that the actors were reduced to the same situation.

Amiens was the exception I have mentioned. He was personated by a remarkably good-looking young lad, who had only joined the company a few days before, a stranger to all the company, and although he had apparently never before followed the profession, an exceeding good actor. The squire was enraptured with him as soon as he made his appearance, laid down his pipe, and insisted on drinking his health in a bumper immediately. He also fell desperately in love with the lady who played Rosalind.

"Fine gal," said he, "by the Lord; with a most sweet voice; plays Rosalind like an angel,—a heavenly Rosalind! My service to ye, lass, I wish ye merry, and a better Orlando than that thin-faced gull we have just hissed off." In short, the squire

applauded Rosalind to the echo, and her beauty and liveliness restored the good humour which the two sticks of the former scene had disturbed.

Thus the first act ended, and my turn approached. I cannot say that I felt quite easy under this sort of infliction ; indeed, the whole company were rendered somewhat nervous, by the downright old squire and his unceremonious remarks. He was getting more fuddled, too, and ever and anon complaining of the delay between the acts, crying out for Jaques and his favourite speech about the poor sequestered deer in the forest ; whilst his two lovely daughters, hanging about his chair, sought to quiet his irritability and persuade him to fill his glass less often.

Our company had been rather put to it for a supply of foresters for the scene, and some of the old gentleman's serving men, two grooms, the helper, and the footman, had been pressed into the service, and put into such costume as the exigence would allow of ; for the company were not only wanting in figures for the play, but there was also a difficulty in dressing them when found. In fact, the strolling company resembled that described by Goldsmith, when the same coat which served Romeo turned with the blue lining outward, served for his friend Mercutio ; a large piece of crape sufficed at once for Juliet's petticoat and pall ; a pestle and mortar from a neighbouring apothecary's answered all the purposes of a bell, and the landlord's own family, wrapped in white sheets, served to fill up the procession.

Under these circumstances, which I did not discover till just before we had assembled to play our parts, I felt considerable annoyance, especially when I had to make my debut before such an unceremonious judge as was seated before us. I felt as much ashamed of my companions, indeed, as Falstaff did of his recruits. However, the bell invited us, the second act commenced, and " my co-mates and brothers in exile " were fairly in Arden.

Meanwhile, whilst the second act was thus in preparation, the hearty old buck had been drinking potations pottle deep, and completely sewed up the one fiddler who, seated before the lights arranged across the room, constituted our orchestra.

" Hang thee, thou villanous scraper," he roared, " thou hast played us but that one sorry tune all this time. Thou shalt drink, man—there's rum punch for thee. Egad, but I'll put life into thy precious fiddle-bow ! "

In short, the fiddler was soon whistled drunk, and like Master Robert Shallow, carried off to bed.

The similitude of our company to the description of the strollers above, was, indeed, nearer than the reader would have imagined ; for the doublet of Orlando was, with many apologies, appropriated by the manager, with the addition of a hunting bugle and a cross-hilted *couteau de chasse*, as the hunting-gear of the melancholy Jaques. How they intended to manage when Orlando and Jaques should appear on the stage together, I know not, nor indeed had

I ever an opportunity of discovering, for the performance came to an abrupt close before we arrived at that part of the play.

The good duke was played by the manager, who was both short and fat ; I myself was upwards of six feet in height, and the rest of the foresters were as ungainly in their appearance as they were motley in apparel. However, I played my part to the satisfaction of the audience. The squire was enraptured, broke his crutch in applauding, and drank my health half-a-dozen times, before I had got through his favourite speeches about the wounded deer. The ladies also did me the favour to approve of my personation of the character, and threw their bouquets at my feet. The squire praised my voice, the ladies my person.

"D—," cried the former, "but that fellow can act. There's none of your clipping and cutting, wringing and clinging, attitudinizing, ranting and raving, like a beggar in an epileptic fit. He's a good man's picture too : a good-looking, strong fellow."

In fact, the whole audience, from the master of the mansion to the kitchen wench, were enchanted with my powers, and I felt elevated accordingly, when another unlucky stroke of fortune once more levelled me to the common standard of humanity. In the next scene, Orlando was absent without leave ; we were to have exchanged coats again, as per agreement, whilst Duke Frederick gives directions to his people to make search after Celia and Rosalind. The stage waited, however, and no Orlando was to be found.

"Dang, that weasel-gutted Orlando," said the squire ; "I suppose he's gone along with Rosalind and Celia to Arden."

"I would it were no worse, sir," said the butler, who had left the room to help the search, and now returned, with a face of dismay. "But my pantry is completely sacked, and all the plate gone with them."

"It was too true ; gone he was, together with the gentleman who had played the wrestler, and Old Adam. They had taken advantage of the whole household being spectators of the scene, and unmolested had packed up and made off with all the plate they could readily lay their hands on. This of course caused an abrupt termination to the play. The squire was in a furious rage, and ordering the doors to be secured, sent instantly for a constable to have us all conveyed before a magistrate. As for me, I fared worse than any of them ; for Orlando, who had been priggish in the early part of the evening, had taken the opportunity of pocketing one or two of the stray spoons, before he changed his coat ; and the idea of the greater robbery striking him, from seeing the plate left exposed in the pantry, he had in his eagerness overlooked the more petty theft, and left me the reversion of his misdeeds.

I might, however, have still escaped disgrace, but for my own wilfulness, as the squire declined at first to subject me to the ordeal of a search. I, however, insisted upon being searched like the rest,

and to the horror of myself and astonishment of the audience, in the pockets of my doublet were discovered the drumsticks of a devilled turkey, a slice of cold plum-pudding, two silver forks, and a gravy-spoon.

It was in vain that I protested my innocence, and accounted for the stolen articles being found upon me in consequence of having assumed the real thief's doublet. It was in vain that I protested that my ignorance of the knowledge of the treasures I carried about me was but another proof of my honesty, as, although I had been annoyed by their weight and clatter, even whilst I enacted my part, I had forbore to make search after the annoyance, in consideration that the pockets of another man's coat ought to be as sacred from my fingers, whilst on my back, as if it was on his own. The squire, now in a maudlin state, and past reasoning with, was inexorable. He vowed he could have consented to forgive me if I had not acted Jaques so well, and I doubly deserved punishment accordingly.

"None but men of fine parts, I tell thee, lass," he said to his daughter, "deserve to be hanged. This is some stage-struck youth, who has run away from his friends; and by the blood of the Mirabels, this will be a lesson to him as long as he lives. Take him awa, constable, kick the rest o' them out of doors, and send out horse and foot after the other runagates."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"I'll disrobe me
And suit myself;
As does a Briton peasant : so I'll fight;
So I'll die."

"Away, boy, from the troops, and save thyself;
For friends kill friends, and the disorder's such
As war were hood-winked."

SHAKSPERE.

SUCH was the commencement and finish of my theatrical career. I was now utterly digusted with life, and, like Macbeth, "'gan to be aweary of the sun." The shame and disgrace of this last business affected me more than anything that had yet happened.

It was on the third evening after these unfortunate theatricals, that, as I was seated in the cell of the prison to which I had been conveyed, I felt so totally unhinged at the sad prospect before me, I was tempted almost to end my life and misfortunes together. Dejected and wretched, without one ray of comfort, my eye rolled from the roof to the floor of the wretched cell in which I was confined, in all the frenzy of despair, and seizing a knife which lay upon the table before me, I was about to plunge it into my heart, when my hand was stayed by some one, who, in

the agony of my mind I had not previously noticed being admitted to visit me.

My visitor seated himself unceremoniously upon the truckle bed which stood beside the walls of my cell, and I knew him directly for the youth who played the part of Amiens at Wildhawk Hall.

"I have arrived, it seems, at an opportune moment," said he. "Avoid that last resort of the unhappy, Mr. Snooks. Combat the fiend, I bring you good news; the real thief has been discovered. Master Orlando and his companions were yesterday taken at Liverpool. They have completely exonerated you from all share in the theft. You may, therefore, consider yourself at liberty."

It had struck me, during the time we had been acting, that I had somewhere seen features which closely resembled those of this youth; but I totally failed in calling to mind whom he bore so great a likeness to amongst my recent friends. He was a slight, effeminate-looking lad, with hair dark as a raven's wing, and the complexion of a gipsy.

The miserable soon make acquaintance; and we became friends from that hour. I was the more inclined to meet his advances towards an intimacy, as I found he had exerted himself greatly to discover the delinquents in the recent robbery, and prove my innocence. He seemed, like myself, "out of suits with fortune," and to have moved in a genteeler sphere than that in which I beheld him. So much of his history he confided to me, that, being at variance with his relatives, he had taken to the stage, and being a good musician, with an agreeable voice, he intended to quit the present wretched company, and try for an engagement amongst a better set. We agreed, therefore, to club our small stock of cash together, and together resolved to seek for better fortune.

As soon, therefore, as I was formally set at liberty, we took our leave of the town of Derby, in whose prison I had thus been for a short time an inmate, and together took our way to Manchester. Here we got an engagement with the company at that time playing there; and becoming favourites with the manufacturing audience, managed to put money in our purse. With all our predilection, however, for the profession we had chosen, Gilpin Swart, for that was the name he chose me to know him by, found it was not quite so much to our taste as we had anticipated.

To meet the tastes of the audience before whom we exhibited, we were compelled to play our parts according to their ideas, instead of our own. To speak and act as nature dictated made no impression; but to strain the voice to an unnatural pitch, then suddenly drop it to a whisper, in fact to rave and bellow, attitudinize and strut, was, we found, the only way to merit applause amongst the mob—the only way, too, to gain it. We therefore resolved to quit a town where monkeys and wild beasts were evidently more suitable to the tastes of the inhabitants than actors of the legitimate drama

It is not necessary to dwell upon the straggling life we now led for many months, eating where we could get it, and at times half starved for weeks together. There is perhaps no class of individuals more thoughtless or improvident than the poor player. Whilst pinched with hunger, he is compelled to appear merry as a grig, in order to move to laughter the pampered and the *ennuyés*. Yet, no sooner has he coin in his pocket, than in the licence of the tavern it is spent.

My youthful companion was a great comfort to me in my adversity. As long as he was with me, so attentive was he to all my wayward wants and wishes, that he was more like my servant than my friend. There was, however, a reserve about him which I could never sufficiently account for. I could never "delve him to the root," and find out the slightest cue to his history. It was a silent sorrow that he bore with him: a grief he never expressed. But his attachment to myself was unbounded since the time we had first met, and I returned his friendship in an equal degree, and forbore to press him for his secret.

It was whilst we were amusing the inhabitants of the town of Gravesend with our professional powers, that I first heard of the intended organization of a body of Englishmen for the service of the Queen of Spain. Totally disgusted with our present mode of life, the idea of something in the way of actual service was delightful to me, and I instantly resolved to enrol myself under the banners of the British Legion.

I broke the subject to my companion; but he rather, I thought, disliked the idea. He turned pale at its mention, and tried to dissuade me from the project. I was, however, so determined on the adventure, that he at last agreed to go with me. Like Archer and Aimwell, I resolved, rather than starve by slow degrees in the streets of an English village, to drag my unfortunate body to some foreign counterscarp, and die gallantly in the breach. I was the more resolved in this, as I had learned, within the last month or so, that my father still resided abroad, very much involved and straitened in his circumstances, still completely under the influence of his wife and her relatives, though much better in health; and he had so great an aversion to my very name, that it was never allowed to be mentioned in his presence. He had completely disinherited me.

As we heard that the part of the Legion which had just departed upon the expedition, was on its first enrolment in rather a disorganized state, being composed of "the cankers of a calm world and long peace," we resolved, as we had a few pounds at that time in our pockets, to seek the Spanish shore, and there offer our services, in the hope of obtaining commissions in the force, or serving at all events in a somewhat less degrading situation than that of private soldiers.

When, however, we arrived in Spain, and sought the headquarters, I found, on reconnoitring, so many faces that I had seen and known whilst running my brief military career in Eng-

land, that I was unwilling to have my story canvassed. The chances were, I thought, that I should quickly involve myself in fresh quarrels with my brother officers, even if I did obtain a commission; and, together with my young companion, I enrolled myself in the corps of —, a flank battalion, composed of desperadoes brave as the weapons they carried, brothers in arms as in adversity, ready to die for each other as to eat with each other, and vowing neither to give nor receive quarter in the field.

This corps, indeed, suited our purpose to a hair. We had professed to each other that we came to Spain to die; to be rid of life in battle, unknown, uncared for, "sword in hand." For myself this was excusable, as I knew there was no distinction I could gain, no rank in the service I had enlisted into, which would restore me to that which I once had been, or ever again give me the friends I had once owned. But I ought to have hesitated before I led my youthful companion to take so desperate a step, and involve him in the dangers of such a service.

However, young as he was, he seemed equally ready to set his life upon this cast as myself. For him, he said, existence had no charm; life held out no hope. For a whole year we had now been together, I had never once seen him smile. With these feelings, we were the very fellows for the death and glory men, and were received into this splendid battalion as worthy comrades of those who professed, for the most part, the same sentiments as ourselves. Men from various nations were enrolled in this corps, amongst the hardy Basques, Poland, France, Italy, Germany, and other countries had their representatives, all professing the same dreadful carelessness of life, and vowing neither to give nor take it in the field.

It is unnecessary, as it would be painful, to describe the scenes I witnessed whilst serving amongst those gallant and desperate men. Death we beheld in its most hideous form, till he became absolutely uncared for from his very familiarity amongst us; and my companion and myself grew in great estimation with the whole corps.

Gilpin Swart especially had endeared himself to all who knew him, by his quiet manners, his affection to me his comrade, and his gallantry and cleverness in action. Though so slight and youthful in figure, he was capable of enduring fatigue with the strongest Basque in the company to which he belonged. Towards myself, especially, his devotion was as extraordinary as it was heroic; twice he had saved my life in the field, when severely wounded I lay helpless where I had been shot down. Whether or not the experiment of seeking for an alleviation to the cares and miseries of an unhappy life, answered with others who had enrolled themselves in this service, I know not; to many it brought the bloody death they professed to seek, whilst others again seemed to imagine that in outvying their comrades in the recklessness of their deeds, they both revenged and forgot the sorrows that had sent them as offerings to the "fire-eyed maid of smoky

war." Gilpin and I, however we might admire the conduct of this brave band when in the field, saw many things that filled us with horror and affright, in the dreadful deeds which were sometimes enacted when the field was fought and won. One act perpetrated by some members of the corps, at length brought down so dreadful a punishment upon them, that the remembrance will never be effaced from my mind.

It was whilst we lay in Grenada, that a party of men from various nations committed an act of sacrilege and murder of so heinous a nature, that the General, resolving to put a stop to the repeated crimes which had lately taken place, after in vain endeavouring to discover the real culprits in the transaction, determined to resort to the old law of decimation.

Accordingly, the regiment being paraded in the principal square of the town, the business proceeded; I would willingly spare myself the relation of the painful scene which followed, but that it is necessary to my unlucky tale. The culprits were, I believe, known to many of their comrades, yet no man, even to save himself from the awful chance, thought for one instant of giving up their names. The act for which, perhaps, the innocent were about to suffer, had been a dreadful and wicked act, but the Guides professed the most chivalrous devotion towards each other, and to the last address of the General, requiring them to spare him the dreadful alternative, by denouncing the guilty, they were silent to a man. I pass by unnoticed the splendour of the scene; the sun's rays glinted back from the arms of the different regiments drawn up in that awful square; the gallant staff which attended the General, and all the pride and pomp consequent upon the imposing nature of the dreadful example about to be given. Indeed I scarcely marked it. Drawn out amongst the battalion about to be told off, I felt no fear for myself; but a dreadful apprehension of the lot falling upon my youthful comrade, so unmanned me, that I could scarcely stand. I glanced along the line, and every face was stern, as if about to receive the word of command to charge upon the enemy's lines. I ventured one look upon poor Gilpin, and his countenance was as placid and happy as if he was about to witness a bridal, instead of the dreadful scene shortly to be enacted. I scarcely stop to notice the horrors of suspense, whilst the numbers were called, and every tenth man ordered to the front, and added to the ghastly body so shortly to be slaughtered.

To be brief, what I dreaded, actually happened—the ninth number fell upon myself, the tenth upon Gilpin Swart. From the moment we were enranked upon this ghastly parade, I felt it would be so, and yet the reality came upon me like a stroke of thunder. I felt myself the murderer of this poor and affectionate boy.

Rushing from the ranks in a frenzy of despair, I entreated of the officer in command, that I might myself take the fate which had fallen upon my friend. The whole battalion, iron men as they were, would have scarcely hesitated the exchange, so greatly

had the youth endeared himself to all. It was, however, in vain that I sought to take the fatal lot upon myself; it was in vain I said he was a boy—a perfect child, who was about to suffer—inno-cent of the crime as the commander-in-chief. It was in vain I pleaded that he had friends and connexions of rank and fortune in England, who doubtless grieved for his absence, and would be made happy by his return; whilst I myself, alone in the world, without home, without friends, without country—life a burthen, unknown, unmourned, should bless the chance which ridded me of existence.

My vehemence, notwithstanding the opposition of my friend, caused the officer, to whom I addressed myself, to pause, and refer to the commander-in-chief.

“ ’Tis in vain you plead for me,” said Gilpin, as we stood locked in each other’s arms. “ There is no power can alter the stern law that dooms me; and even if your generous wish should be allowed, I oppose myself to its being carried into effect. I wish to die, and embrace my fate with cheerfulness. Grieve not for me, my friend, but grant me one request, and I am happy. Take this letter, and with it give me your promise, that you will forbear perusing its contents till the volleying musketry has for ever separated us.”

Hardly knowing what I uttered, I gave the promise, and received the letter. The next moment he was enranked amongst the doomed. I remember little more of the dreadful scene: a dizziness came before my eyes as I beheld him standing amongst that unhappy section. The dreadful sound of musketry seemed to tear open my brain, and I fell heavily upon the earth.

For one moment I had resolved to break open the letter I held in my hand, in hopes something in its contents might have saved my friend; but his eye was upon me, even whilst the fatal muskets of the firing party were being brought to the present, and the remembrance of my sacred word held my hand. Unlucky in that, as in almost every act of my life, had I broken the seal, and my promise, I had saved my friend.

When I recovered my senses, I found myself lying on a pallet stretched upon the flooring of one of the cells of the convent the Guides were then quartered in. At first I looked wildly around for the faithful friend, the youthful comrade, who had been my intimate and inseparable comrade, my adopted brother. In the next, the scene wherein I had borne so prominent a part, presented itself in all its dread reality before me, and I recollected the packet poor Gilpin had, with almost his dying lips, recommended to my perusal. It was still fast clutched in my hand, and tearing it open, I eagerly perused its contents. Grief, astonishment, and regret wholly pervaded me as I did so.

The contents ran somewhat thus:—

“ She who pens these words, your sometime comrade, Gilpin Swart, is a female, and the daughter of your bitterest foe.

“ A presentiment that the doom of death surely awaits me in

the dread trial we are about to undergo, has induced me to change the firm resolve I had made, never to divulge my secret, and stand confessed to one I have loved, not wisely, but too well.

"Could, indeed, the purest, the most disinterested, the most unstained love, expiate the offences and the villany of that part of my family, whose dark deeds have brought down ruin upon your head, that expiation had been mine.

"To be brief, for I have now small time to make the confession : from the first hour I saw you in your father's residence, I loved you. Your generous nature, your high and chivalrous bearing, your sorrows, and even your pride, together with all the evils that fell upon you from the machinations of my own family, were additional incentives to my ardent affection. The utter hopelessness of my feelings ever meeting with return, was no bar to my indulgence in the secret affection which wholly pervaded me. In fine, it was my only my dearest indulgence, to contemplate you from a distance—to live but on a glance of your passing form, during your short visits to and from the Grange. After you had left your home, exiled by the vile intrigues of my own family, I sought an interview with my father, upbraided him with the injustice and iniquity which had made you an alien from your only parent's heart ; and, in disgust, resolved to quit his roof for ever. It was a rash resolve ; but once taken, it was irrevocable. I therefore took a ship boy's semblance, and followed him I loved. During the toilsome march I have listened to the melody of your voice ; in the lonely bivouac I have watched over you as you slept ; and in the tented field I have shared your rations. That I might fall before you has been my sole and continual prayer. I feel now that the day, the very hour has arrived. Farewell, then, for ever ! The knowledge that you will hold me in your hate on learning my name, will never now sadden the heart of

"CATHERINE LEVISON."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Not a soul

But felt a fever of the mad, and played
Some tricks of desperation. All but mariners
Plunged in the foaming brine, and quit the vessel,
Then all a-fire with me; the king's son, Ferdinand,
With hair up-staring (then like reeds, not hair),
Was the first man that leaped; cried, 'Hell is empty,
And all the devils are here.'"

SHAKSPERE.

THE circumstance which I have just related was as singular as it was unlooked for. A hundred little incidents, which rushed upon my memory—incidents which had happened during my in-

timacy with this unhappy being, now struck me so forcibly as to cause me to wonder I had never suspected her sex. The mystery in which her whole history was involved, her secluded habits, and the devotion she had shown to me, even during the short time we had been companions, and associated with this gallant band, all now came before me so vividly, as to make me absolutely astonished at my own blindness in not fathoming her secret. But the stirring life we had led, the dreadful scenes we had gone through, and the abstracted nature of my thoughts, incident to my fallen and degraded situation, had so wholly engrossed me, that I was both careless and regardless of matters which would doubtless have struck me in calmer and happier hours.

As may be surmised, this incident sufficiently satisfied my cravings for active service in Spain. A degree of horror of the service I was in now pervaded my mind; a carrion death seemed to sit and grin at me wherever I turned my eyes. The struggle in which I was engaged seemed marked with unnecessary cruelty, and I resolved at the first opportunity to leave it.

I was destined, however, to meet with further adventures before I did so; and it was not until the British Legion was virtually broken up, that, after I had served in numerous actions, affairs, and skirmishes, more than once narrowly escaping the death I professed to seek both by the sword and pestilence, that I quitted Spain, and, all but penniless, embarked on board a British steamer for the Thames.

During the night we were visited by an awful tempest, and our labouring bark, fretting with her paddles, and groaning and creaking in the angry waters, for some time beating, heaving, and clambering amongst the surge, seemed a solitary mark for the darting lightning to vent its fury upon, every flash showing more plainly the horrors of the black-looking depths around. At length, after lying like a speck amidst the violence of the roaring tide, during the greater part of the night, we were rendered utterly helpless, our engines swamped, our fires extinct, and the vessel, consequently, a log upon the water.

It was lucky for us that the storm had now begun to subside, for, to add to our wretched state, with sailors exhausted, and passengers at their prayers, it was suddenly discovered that the vessel was on fire. A sight now ensued such as I had never beheld in all my former career. A small, insignificant, and trifling machine, an atom, was alight upon the surging waves; the frightened beings who clung about it, apparently alone in a world, over which the dark flood seemed rolling from end to end.

The confusion was dreadful. Many, unable to contemplate the fate awaiting them, threw themselves into the sea; others, in their efforts to gain the part most distant from the flames, were washed off, and, shrieking, carried down; whilst the mass, crowded together where they had retreated foot by foot from the flames, stood with eyes distended, crushed upon each other, as each tremendous wave threw the burning vessel from side to side.

It was whilst I stood clinging to the rigging that my eye fell upon a party of the passengers, whom till now I had not seen.

I myself was in the garb of a common soldier, the uniform of the Guides, my face begrimed, and umbered with dirt and smoke, consequent upon my endeavours whilst assisting the sailors in their efforts at subduing the fire. Thus unheeded in the glaring light of the conflagration, I swung myself up the side of the vessel, forced my way amidst the press, and next moment stood beside a female, the sight of whom had, for the moment, driven even the awful situation I was in from my recollection. When I had succeeded in reaching the spot, I found that the first glance had not deceived me. Leaning upon, and supported by her father and the captain of the vessel, and regarding the scene with a resigned and steady eye, her check like monumental alabaster, and endeavouring to speak words of comfort to her parent's ear, was one, who, in happier hours, I had so well known—the Lady Constance de Clifford.

My surprise at finding them passengers with me in this devoted steamer was the next moment forgotten in the horror I felt at their apparent inevitable fate by so dreadful a death.

The sea meanwhile immediately around the vessel, reflecting the hot flames, looked a bubbling caldron of molten gold; whilst all beyond the immediate influence of the fire, was as black and horrible as the reflected hue of the crashing fire was terrifically brilliant and glowing.

"Oh, heaven!" exclaimed the agonized father of the beautiful Lady de Clifford, as the increasing heat from the burning mass gave him a foretaste of the dreadful death his child must, before many minutes ensued, surely perish by. "Oh, heavens! and is there then indeed no escape from this most cruel fate? O heaven! how have I sinned that thus thy wrath should light so heavily upon me? I cannot pray, my Constance; cease to urge it. Were I alone, I might feel resigned; but this is too horrible. I cannot see thee perish thus by a painful death, scorching and suffocating in the increasing heat. By heaven, we will follow the example set by the crew, and plunge and meet a milder fate!"

So saying, the duke seized his daughter in his arms, and, in a frenzy of despair, was about to leap with her into the foaming sea; but I caught his arm, arrested the consummation, and pointed to a dark and shadowy object, just discernible as it plunged through the distant gloom.

The next moment a perfect yell arose from our vessel: "A sail, a sail! we're saved!"

It was true enough. A large vessel had, for the moment, crossed our path, and was again lost in the darkness. All was now silence and expectation. To the uninitiated, the very fact of a ship being at hand was a saving clause; but the seamen knew better. No boat could live a minute in that sea. Our own boat had been seized, cut adrift, and instantly swamped, whilst the crew of the vessel were engaged below on the first alarm of the fire.

"There is hope, captain," said the duke, doubtfully, as he stood with eye intent, and body bent forwards, trying to peer into the gloom where the ship had appeared.

The captain was silent; he knew too well there was none.

Another shriek of joy. The vessel had tacked, and appeared again. She came bravely on, running so dangerously near, that we seemed once or twice about to be hurled flaming upon her deck.

"A steamer," said the captain; "brave fellow, whoever he is; but he cannot aid us."

"Can he do nothing for us?" inquired the duke.

"Yes," said the captain, "one thing he might do to save us from this increasing misery.—By heaven, my brain's on fire," he continued wildly, as the wind blew the flames towards us; "I cannot longer endure this scorching heat."

"Speak," said the duke; "for heaven's sake, speak: what can be done for us?"

"He might pour a broadside into our vessel, and send us to the bottom," said the captain, plunging headlong into the sea.

Despair again pervaded our ghastly crew. It was evident the stranger could render us no assistance. At this moment, some barrels of gunpowder, in the after-part of the vessel, where the fire raged, blew up, hurling a large fragment of the woodwork into the sea.

The mass came surging round, and was for the moment entangled in the fore-chains, close to where we stood.

"There's your only chance, my lord," said I, pushing the duke forward, seizing upon his daughter, and leaping upon the fragment, before the whole multitude beside us had time to swarm upon and overwhelm it.

The weight of those who gained the wreck disengaged it, and the next instant it was whirled clear.

It was, however, but a perilous and slippery craft; the water every moment washing over those who clung to its surface, and lessening the number in each succeeding wave. In one minute, the sudden darkness with which we were enrouded, showed that the burning vessel had gone down.

The lady had fainted; but I held her in one arm, whilst the other was twisted firmly amongst some fragments of rigging; the duke also securely held on close beside us, as we lay.

Suddenly, the advancing paddles of the stranger showed she was at hand, cruising about the spot where our vessel had gone down, in the vain hope to save her. The next minute, the rapid beat seemed close upon us. Still holding my precious charge, I raised myself upon my knees, and looked into the gloom before me.

Destruction from the advancing vessel seemed inevitable. I beheld the dark object, even upon the pitchy waves, just about to dash over us, as I raised, amidst the roar of the tempest a yell of despair.

Under no circumstance is the discipline of an English ship of war relaxed. In the regularity and silence with which the vessel was worked amidst the storm, my wailing cry was heard; and as the sound was carried onwards in the rushing wind, it was answered by the roar of the word of command, on the deck of the *Hotspur*. The prow of the vessel turned at the sound, merely grazing the fragment to which we clung, and which the next instant, crashing against the paddle-box, was driven beneath the waves. The moment I had seen the inevitable fate of our wretched raft, I had resolved to make one desperate effort to save Lady de Clifford; and as the prow of the steamer dipped in the water, in darting past, I had seized, with the grasp of a maniac, the fore-chains. Blue lights were at that moment ignited, and we were saved.

Too much exhausted to stand, I lay panting upon the slippery deck, where I had been hauled up by the sailors. My lovely burden was safe. She had been hauled up with me, unlocked from my convulsive grasp, and carried down below.

But where was the duke, her father, and the few sailors who had clung to the fragment when it was struck.

Their fate was but too certain; since the starboard paddle of the *Hotspur* was dashed to pieces with the blow, and the vessel itself was crippled upon the roaring tide.

The Hon. Augustus Dareall, commanding the *Hotspur*, was a young man of about five-and-thirty years of age, a good specimen of the British sailor. As soon as the bustle consequent upon this accident to his vessel had subsided, and he felt himself at liberty to leave the deck, he turned his attention to the two persons who had been so miraculously snatched from the waves.

Struck with the surpassing beauty of the Lady de Clifford, who, still insensible, her long dark hair, mermaid-like, glittering in the salt spray, as she laid upon the sofa of the cabin to which the sailors had first conveyed her, he ordered the immediate attendance of the surgeon and the coxswain's wife to administer restoratives, and then directed her to be conveyed to a berth. He then inquired for the man who had been the means of saving her.

"Mr. Blowhard," said he to his lieutenant, as they turned to leave the cabin, "if the sea had swallowed up that specimen of female loveliness, I think I should have renounced it for ever. She is another Venus, sir, risen from the deep. I do not think I ever beheld so exquisite a face and form."

"A splendid craft, sir," returned the lieutenant. "I thought the first time I ever saw Mrs. Blowhard, she was a 'trim built wherry;' but heaven save us, this lady—"

"Makes your swan a crow, Blowhard, eh!" returned the captain. "Did you notice the poor fellow who held her so firmly in his grasp. In the hurry of the moment I had scarcely time to look on him."

"A common soldier, sir," returned the lieutenant, "one of the disbanded men of the British Legion, I think."

"I must see him," said the captain, "and know who this female is. Let him be taken to my cabin, Mr. Blowhard, while I give a glance on deck. The wind is subsiding; we must make a run for the nearest port."

"The poor fellow is too much exhausted, sir," said the lieutenant, "at present to be spoken with."

"Let him be carefully tended, then," said the captain; "and as soon as I have been above, I will come and see to him myself."

Accordingly when sufficiently recovered, I was visited by Captain Dareall, and examined as to who and what myself and companion in misfortune were.

"Your appearance belies your garb, young man," he said: "you are not what you seem."

"A common soldier, sir," I answered, "of the Anglo-Spanish Legion; nothing more."

"Enough," returned the commander. "I seek not to pry into another man's affairs. You have behaved like a gallant fellow, however, in managing to save the female, your companion. Who is she?"

"The daughter of the Duke of Hurricane," said I, "Lady de Clifford."

"Indeed," returned the captain, "I heard that the Duke of Hurricane was at Lisbon for his health. This lady, then, was a passenger on board that ill-fated vessel; going out, I suppose, to join her father. This is a lucky chance for you, young man—your fortune's made. Doubtless the duke will reward you handsomely for your exertions in saving his only child."

"The duke, sir," said I, "is drowned. I saw him struck beneath the waters by your paddles. He was upon the fragment of the wreck, this vessel went over."

About a fortnight after the events narrated in the foregoing chapter, two ladies were seated in the principal apartment of the governor's house at St. Sebastian; the younger female was evidently an invalid—she reclined upon a sofa. Her companion, who was very considerably her elder, paced the apartment as if not in the most amiable frame of mind. Both were in the deepest mourning, and the "dejected 'haviour of the visage" of the invalid proclaimed her as melancholy as her garb.

The elder female was the Duchess of Hurricane: the younger was her daughter, Lady de Clifford. The Duchess had but lately arrived from England, summoned by the news of her recent bereavement, and her daughter's consequent dangerous illness.

There was a pause in the conversation for a few minutes; at length the duchess, stopping and regarding her daughter for some little time, thus addressed her—

"Lady de Clifford," said she, "I am, indeed, surprised at the continuance of your folly. I must really insist upon your giving up this nonsense. The interest you feel about this youth is as disgraceful to yourself as degrading to your family. I have so far

conceded to your wishes, as to permit every inquiry to be made after this man; and had we been successful in finding him, there is no reward I would not have conferred upon him, even to the half of my fortune, in return for the service he has rendered; but, to see the daughter of a De Clifford thus pining after a beggarly outcast, degraded and worthless as this man, this Blount, has proclaimed himself, believe me, I had rather you had perished in the ocean, than that the world should know of your folly. You are now sufficiently recovered to travel, and next week I shall insist upon your setting out. I hate the sea; and this last melancholy catastrophe has given me even a greater distaste than ever of it. I shall rather therefore chance the dangers of a land journey, even in this distracted land. We will cross the Pyrenees into France, and winter in Paris."

The Lady de Clifford made no reply.

"Is not this too ridiculous," continued the duchess, addressing the Honourable Captain Dareall, who at that moment entered the room; "I am sure I have to apologise to you for all the trouble my daughter has given in thus requesting of you to search out the soldier who saved her life."

"It is worthy of her noble nature, madam," returned the captain. "I honour Lady de Clifford for the interest she has betrayed."

"Have you been more successful?" inquired Lady de Clifford, without heeding her mother's angry looks: "I am anxious, before I leave St. Sebastian, to make every possible effort to discover this young man; not only in order that I may be the means of rewarding and extricating him from the difficulties in which he seems to be, but that during the horrors of our situation, I thought I recognised one whom I knew in happier hours. Nay, I cannot have been mistaken. There was but one man who could have saved me, amidst the terrors of that night."

"There are many men, Lady de Clifford," said the captain, drawing his chair closer to the sofa on which she reclined, "who would have tried, ay, and blessed the chance that sent them to your aid."

"Your description," said the Lady de Clifford (evading the intended compliment), "confirms me in my supposition. Did you by no chance, during our passage hither learn his name?"

"Whilst on board the Hotspur he was studious to conceal it," said the captain; "but his clothes made a false report of him: he was evidently of a rank in life superior to the situation of a private soldier."

The Lady de Clifford heaved a sigh.

"He shunned all intercourse," continued the captain, "with myself and officers. To his sad mind his misery seemed disgrace; that at least was the impression I had of him whilst on board the Hotspur. On reaching the port, after thanking me,

as I told you, for the attention he had received, he was one of the first to leap on shore, and I saw him no more."

The Lady Constance sank back upon the couch, learned her cheek upon her hand, and seemed lost in thought.

"You will pardon me," said the captain, after regarding her for a few moments, "if I venture to say that this youth cannot, I think, be a person you have known in former days."

"I am sure of it," said the duchess, quickly; "then you have discovered him, Captain Dareall."

"I have not, madam," returned the captain; "but those I have employed have at length succeeded in tracing him. He has left St. Sebastian, and he will be lucky if he escape out of the country. For his services rendered Lady de Clifford, I hope and trust he will."

"I begin to think this is our man, after all," said the duchess. "What has he done, Captain Dareall?—robbed a church?"

"No, madam, not exactly that; though, perhaps, what in this country will be considered even far greater sacrilege; indeed, I may say, you are not far off the truth: he has robbed the church, in one sense, for he has broken into a convent and stolen a nun."

The Lady Constance again threw herself back upon the couch, and hid her face in her hands.

"I could have sworn it," said the duchess. "Ratcliffe Blount to the life; was not that the name, Captain Dareall, that he went by?"

"No, madam," returned the captain: "Peter Snooks was the name the person who saved your daughter's life went by."

"Now, Constance," said the duchess, "I hope you are satisfied."

"I am, madam," returned the young lady.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"How wildly, then, walks my estate in France."

"Hark!

It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman

Which givest the stern'st good night. He is about it."

SHAKSPEARE.

My departure from St. Sebastian was indeed earlier than I had intended. It was hastened by a circumstance which happened to me a few days after Captain Dareall had put in there to refit.

Trusting that Lady de Clifford had not recognised me in the degraded situation I was reduced to whilst our crippled vessel made for the nearest port, I kept myself as much aloof from all intercourse with the officers of the vessel as possible, and studiously avoided being seen by them on shore. Indeed, Captain

Dareall had enough to employ him in keeping his vessel afloat till he arrived in port, for the damage she had sustained in the gale was greater than at the time he imagined. Lady de Clifford, too, was so seriously unwell, that I saw her not again whilst we were on board; I, however, managed to ascertain that she had been received upon landing, at the house of the governor, and that soon afterwards the duchess had arrived from England.

The duke, I found, had, some time before been advised to try a milder climate, in consequence of an affection of the lungs, resulting from the wound he had received from Lord Cœur de Lion. He had wintered at Madeira, was greatly recovered, and the duchess, having preceded him to England a few months before, he had touched at Lisbon on his intended homeward voyage. How that had turned out, we have seen in the foregoing chapter.

Keeping now, therefore, as much secluded during the day as possible, I resolved to make my way across the Pyrenees and enter France. Upon deliberation, I resolved to present myself at the Château Roussillon, where, when I had last heard of my father, he was residing, and observe how matters were progressing there. The letter I had read from the unfortunate being, Charlotte Levison, had frequently recurred to me of late; and my ideas were a good deal changed by it: I began to think that it was my duty to see after my parent, and myself observe the situation he was in. After having visited him, it was my intention to try and get into the Austrian service. A few dollars yet remained in my pocket; I was as hardy and strong as the mountaineers I had served with, and I only lingered from day to day, in the vain hope of getting but a passing glance of Lady de Clifford before she left.

One night, as I wandered through the town, in passing the angle of the wall of a convent, a small postern door was hurriedly dashed open, and a man, his sword drawn in his hand, darted into the street. He glanced hastily around, and seeing me as I stood in the shadow of the wall called me to him.

"A soldier," he said, soon as I approached him, "and an Englishman. Good! Bear a hand here for a few moments, my lad. My friend has failed me, you must take his place; follow quickly and silently."

Returning the way he came, he re-entered the dark postern, and the next moment we were withinside the convent walls. A dark lantern stood upon the pavement, which he snatched up, and darting into a cavernous recess cut in one side of the passage we had entered, he brought forth a female closely muffled up from head to foot.

"Take this lady," said he, hurriedly, "and await me beside the postern by which we entered. In two minutes I will join you." So saying, he bounded up a flight of stone steps, and we were left in darkness. I did as he requested of me, for I thought at the moment I recognised a voice I had somewhere heard before

Almost carrying my charge, who seemed too much alarmed to walk without great assistance, I groped my way back, and opening the postern in readiness to make a fair start, awaited the coming of my employer.

The moon now shone full upon my companion as I continued to support her trembling form, and I found I had possession of a nun, and as far as I could judge by her clinging form, she was both young and handsome.

Hardly had I made the discovery, when the clash of weapons was heard in the distance, withinside the building, and the hurried tread of some one leaping down the stone staircase six steps at a bound. I knew not at the moment, whether to stand fast, or fly, and to add to my discomfort, the great bell of the convent began to ring furiously.

Meanwhile, the footsteps approached, and my new comrade rushed to my side. "Run for it," said he, "unless you wish half-a-dozen stilettos to hack each other in your body."

Clasping the fair incognito, and sweeping her along, myself assisting him in the effort, he dashed across the street in which the convent was situated, and after turning down one by passage and up another, he made for the suburbs of the town.

Here he led us along a dark and dismal-looking lane, till we came to a lone building, the door of which being unlocked, he dashed it open with his foot, entered, and carefully bolting it behind him, introduced us into a good-sized apartment.

"Huzza!" said he, laughing as he proceeded to light one of the tapers upon the table, "we've cheated the Pope for once. Thanks, my good fellow," said he to me, "for your assistance. You've helped me to steal a nun. But how is this?" continued he, returning towards me, after he had seated his charge upon a couch and disencumbered her of some part of the disguise she was muffled in. "Do my eyes deceive me; or is this Ratcliffe Blount?"

I was as much surprised as himself. It was my friend, Altamont de Montdidier. He had commanded a regiment during the recent struggle, and played as many fantastic tricks whilst in Spain as Cervantes describes himself to have done, whilst a captive among the Moors. The last of his exploits was the present theft.

There was small time for us to compare notes, as Altamont only waited for his friend, Captain Plume, who was engaged with him in this last business, to make the attempt at getting on board a vessel and sailing for England that night. Plume was to have met him at the convent of Santissima Donzella: failing in that, they were to rendezvous at the present refuge, which Altamont had hired for the occasion.

"This meeting," said he to me, during the intervals of his attendance upon the handsome *religieuse*, "is a curious chance. Of all men else I have most wished to discover you. When in England, according to my promise, I busied myself in your affairs,

and have discovered much that it is of importance for you to know. Nay, acting under the advice of my solicitor, I have advertised you, sought you, and offered a reward for your apprehension. Having traced you to Spain, I obtained leave and came out in search of you; but the love of the profession drove your business quite out of my head, and I offered to serve here during this war. In fine, my friend," said he, "I advise you to quit with us to-night. Your presence, I think, is necessary at your father's residence in France, as he is completely in the power of those rogues, the Levisons, added to which, it is necessary I should carry you off, as by involving you in this affair of mine, St. Sebastian is no safe place for you to remain in. Come, then, and let us speed

"For France! for France! for it is more than need."

There is necessarily a hiatus in the twisted and ravelled skein, as he himself in his memoirs designated it, of Ratcliffe Blount's history; for after this adventure of his friend, Altamont, Captain Plume, who was also a party in that action, became possessed of the manuscript which, during his leisure hours at St. Sebastian, he had amused himself by composing.

It appears, however, from what I have myself been able to learn on the subject, that Altamont de Montdidier and his innamorata, together with the whole party, were traced to their retreat, and eventually surprised before they could embark with their prize; Ratcliffe Blount, with his usual luck, was the only one captured, however, the rest making their escape to France.

Doubtless it would have gone hard with our friend, had he not managed to escape from confinement soon after his capture, and get amongst some of his old companions in the mountains, from whence it was not very difficult for him, by evading the outposts of the Carlists, to cross the frontier.

It was then, on a raw and comfortless-looking winter's evening, that a solitary traveller was to be seen wending his way along the high road leading to Caen. He was but scantily clad against the severity of the season, having merely the coarse red clothing of a common soldier on his body, the said garments being considerably the worse for wear consequent upon hard service; an old red forage cap also graced his head, and a knapsack was upon his back.

His fine height and the graceful proportions of his well-formed limbs, his head carried aloft with an air of the most determined courage and resolution, was not, however, to be disguised by the soiled and tattered condition of the poor habiliments he wore; and the peasant girl, as she tripped across his path, was fain to stop and look back upon the handsome appearance of the young soldier as he passed. There was, however, no answering glance in the corner of the traveller's eye, as the lively villager re-

garded him; but stern resolution, and a determination to devour space, and get over the long miles, seemed to possess him as he strode onwards.

A stout oaken cudgel was in his hand, useful either as an assistant in his journey, or as a defence against assault. The night was settling down dark and sudden, and the pattering rain upon the foliage of the densely wooded country he traversed, together with the distant rumble of the thunder, announced to the traveller the approach of a storm.

He had made inquiry at the last post-house he had stopped at in the road (some five miles back), for the Château Roussillon, and after receiving a direction to it, had also, with apparent carelessness, added a few questions about its present occupiers.

An English family, he was told, had been residents in the château for some time; but the neighbourhood knew little about them. They kept much within the grounds, and except travelling occasionally to and from Caen, were seldom to be seen.

The name of the old gentleman for whom the château was first of all taken was Blount, he understood; "Le Sieur Blount, camarado," said the ostler of the cabaret. "I was hired there myself when they first came, as a helper in the stables. That was when Sir Blount first came from Angleterre. At that time he brought carriages, horses, hounds, and many servants, just as any other English noble; but since that, things had gone on differently, and although the château had been almost newly furnished by the quantity of articles sent for from England at that period, together with plate and other valuables, yet the whole had been lately removed at different intervals, and sent to Paris, where my Lady Blount was wintering. Sir Blount himself," added the Frenchman, "I have heard, is *un peu volage*. Ha, ha!" he continued, as he turned off towards the stables; "you English swallow so much fog in your swampy island, that you are always troubled with *de vapeurs*, as you call it. Milor Blount, I have heard, has not been seen outside the château for some months. He must be watched, or he might cut his throat some fine day. Ah, bah! *un mauvais sujet*, with a d—d bad set about him."

The traveller stayed not to hear more, but throwing down a few sous for what he had taken, hitched up his pack, and addressed himself to his journey. As soon as he came to a part of the road which was intersected by a narrow and shadowy lane, he stopped, and paused for a few minutes, looking carefully around him, to mark the spot, as the increasing gloom covered the landscape.

"This," he said, "must be my route, according to the direction given me: I was to turn to the right, when I came to a rough lane, some five miles and a half from the inn I inquired at." In saying this, the soldier brandished his cudgel, and entering the gloomy thoroughfare, continued his progress up the ascent leading into the thick woods on his right. After about half an hour's

quick walking, he arrived at some large gates, flanked by a stout wall surrounding a sort of park or chace, and from whence he could plainly discern the château straight before him.

The gateway which thus brought him to a stand, was as ancient and forlorn-looking as the mansion it led to. Two large pillars flanked it on either side, square, massive, and lofty. One was dismantled, a broken statue lying half-buried in the long grass at its base; the other was adorned by the figure of the antlered Acteon in the agony of being pulled down by his own dogs. The gates themselves were elaborately wrought, and of iron, and so ponderous withal, that, had they been open, it would have required the efforts of a strong arm to swing them back upon their hinges; at the present time, however, they were fast locked.

Our traveller, after looking through the bars for a brief space, showed he was not likely to be stopped in his progress by locks, bolts, or bars, for taking his oaken clump between his teeth, he clambered up them with the agility of a cat; and as quickly surmounting them, spite of the iron spikes with which they were garnished, he descended on the other side, and stood next moment in the park of Roussillon, and bent his steps towards the château.

Château Roussillon was one of those comfortless looking edifices, at which the English are occasionally to be found economizing in the land of frogs and red-legged partridges, yeleft France. It bore the stamp of by-gone grandeur, and had evidently felt the blasts of three centuries at least; but it had nothing of that time-honoured and venerable appearance of our own Elizabethan Halls in merry England.

There was an indescribable air of discomfort about it—a sort of private mad-house appearance. It wanted something as a residence which the spectator could hardly define; whilst even the grounds around it had that rubbishing, unpicturesque look, so often to be found in a foreign domain.

The stranger, after trying the foredoor of the mansion with a force that made the lintels shake, stepped a pace or two back, and gazed at it for a few moments. The shutters of the various casements were fast closed, and it looked uninhabited in the front; he, therefore, very deliberately walked round to the rear. There was no domestic to be seen about to interfere with his promenade, and his appearance being merely that of a sturdy applicant for bread, a disbanded legionist making his way homewards, the chances are, if he had met with any of the out-door dependents, a *sacre* and an order to leave the premises would have been perhaps all he would have been greeted with.

He was somewhat more fortunate in his application for admittance on this side the gloomy building, for on lifting the latch of the door, after entering a sort of courtyard in the rear, he found himself in a long, narrow passage, evidently leading to the servants' offices.

The mansion he now found was inhabited, as the passage was

lighted by two or three common-looking lanterns fixed to its walls, without whose dull flame the passenger would scarcely, even in the day-time, have found his way.

Directing his steps along this passage, the soldier now entered the kitchen. There was fire in the grate, and even signs of its recently having been used, articles of culinary use being strewed about; but no one was in it. He therefore passed onwards, and cautiously ascended to the great hall of the mansion.

Whilst he paused to look around, he heard voices in an apartment near; and as he was about to introduce himself amongst the speakers, he distinctly heard his own name pronounced. He therefore thought it no degradation to stop and ascertain so much of the purport of the dialogue as related to his own person; besides, he had introduced himself, he considered, into the enemy's camp, and stratagem was all fair in war. He was determined to proceed with something more of caution, since he had so far prospered in his exploratory movements.

"Monsieur Ratcliffe," he heard, in the accent of a foreigner, "may yet turn up, Monsieur Levison. I think you are too hasty in your movements. According to your own account, Monsieur Blount cannot last much longer. Food, you say, is bad for his complaint. That is a bad sign, *mon ami*—an empty sack can't stand. If the Englishman no eat, he most die; what more you have, sare? Non! I shall set my face against rough measure; 'tis dangerous, and may be discovered."

"I do not agree with you, count," returned the second speaker; "for our own sakes we must make all sure: since the old dotard signed the will in our favour, I have kept him close. This Ratcliffe, too, I have traced all through his miserable career. He was wrecked, I tell you. My informant writes me from St. Sebastian; not a soul escaped but one passenger—a lady. There are many reasons why this business should be brought to a termination to-night. I have removed every domestic, and given you a fair field, count. 'Tis yourself must do the deed—that, you know, is part of our contract. Hark!" he said, pausing, "what noise was that in the hall? I thought I heard a footstep. *Mein Got*, count, get up and look!"

The count arose from his seat; and smiling at his companion's face of alarm, he took the candle, and throwing open the door, without stepping into the hall, held the taper aloft, and took a careless look into the gloomy recesses of the vast apartment.

"It is noting my friend," he said, "but the thunder that disturb you, and the old man groaning up stairs. Why not," he said, resuming his seat, "why not settle this business yourself, Monsieur Levison? I not like the job."

"I cannot do it, count," returned the other.

"Ah! you are afraid, Monsieur Anglais."

"I have not been a soldier like yourself, count. I am afraid I cannot look on blood."

"Bah! what stuff!" said the count; "you rob the old gentle-

man; you get all his moneys; you make him sign de will for you; you get him down to my château, and lock him up, and try to starve him to death; and yet you cannot give him the *coup de grace*."

"You forget to add, count, that I am to give you your share; and also"—

"*Bien*, I remember dat; and my Lady Blount is to be Countess Roussillon, to reward me wid her fair hand—good. Where does he lie?"

"In the chamber on the right, when you reach the corridor; the key hangs above the door. I repeat, it *must* be done, Count, and to-night: psha! 'tis but to pluck the pillow from beneath his head."

"And the Lady Blount," said the count, "eh?"

"She is, as you know, only too anxious to become Countess Roussillon. You are to settle the estate upon her. The papers are all drawn, and nothing awaits us but the old man's death."

"And you are afraid to strike the blow, Monsieur Anglais?"

"I am," returned the other, "I confess it; and you also."

"Me, sare?" said the count, sternly, "me afraid, *sacré!* I am *soldat français*, Monsieur. I serve in the revolution; in the grand army, at Marengo, at Austerlitz, in Egypt. *Eh bien!* sare, in Spain, in Portugal—I chase your cursed nation to Corunna. Afraid, sare?—*Non!* I hate your cursed nation; my *grand* curse upon it! The *affaire* is *finie*. The old man dies!—*allons donc*, show me the chamber!"

The traveller stayed to hear no more. He stepped noiselessly across the hall; and guided by the glimmering lamp which burned above the staircase, he cautiously and noiselessly ascended the stairs, unlocked the door he had heard described, and entered the chamber. It was a spacious apartment: a lamp stood upon the table, and a heavy-looking bedstead, antique and faded as the tapestry with which the room was hung, stood with hearse-like grandeur at the farther end.

Seizing the lamp from the table, the soldier approached the bed, drew aside the curtains, and gazed upon its occupant. Wasted and attenuated, with a beard of a month's growth upon his visage, his father lay sleeping before him.

He had scarcely time to set down his lamp, and conceal himself amongst the dark furniture on one side the bed, when he heard the approaching footsteps of the assassin. The count appeared surprised at finding the key in the door, instead of hanging withoutside. He, however, supposed that his nervous comrade had forgotten it in his last visit, and cautiously entered. After raising the candle, and carefully examining the countenance of the sleeper, he glanced round the room, set the lamp again upon the table, drew a long American bow-knife from the breast of his coat, and stepped beside the bed.

"Ah!" he said, as he again regarded the sleeper, and felt its point, "'tis not necessary."

Plucking the cushion from the chair beside the bed, he laid the knife in its place, and again approached it.

The soldier had time, meanwhile, from his place of concealment, to observe the assassin narrowly. He was an athletic-looking figure, more than six feet in height, dressed in a military frock-coat, padded out in front like the breast of a pouting pigeon, and he wore large moustaches upon his upper lip, which descended over his mouth like a portcullis.

The next moment, after poising the pillow on high with both hands, the Frenchman made a quick step towards the bed, and was about to throw himself upon the sleeper, when he was caught, midway, by the throat, by a gripe as if a vice had closed upon his windpipe; and, with eyes starting from their sockets, he was borne backwards along the apartment, and held firmly against the wall.

For a moment the count was paralyzed, as with blackened and swollen face he glared upon the infuriated assailant who thus pinned his head against the wainscot. The next minute he made the most tremendous efforts to free himself. It was, however, in vain that he struggled; his capturer held him with the strength and resolution of a raging madman; and then drawing him from the wall, half choked, he hurled him to the ground, and fractured his skull with one blow of the oaken towel he held in his right hand.

The reader has, doubtless, by this time, surmised that the disbanded soldier, and our old friend, Ratcliffe Blount, were one and the same person. His uncompromising and resolute disposition had, for once, stood him in good stead. He had arrived in the nick of time, caught his enemies red handed, and in the fact, and saved his parent from a violent death. Having thus summarily dealt with the French count, he kicked him out of his path, with as little remorse as if he had been a bundle of foul clothes, and turned his attention to the intended victim.

Awakened from his slumbers by the sudden conflict, the old gentleman had raised himself in his bed to behold the deadly and violent struggle taking place in his apartment; and having been the horrified spectator of its termination, he now saw the tall form of the soldier approach him with the intent, as he supposed, to finish the affair by his murder.

Almost helpless, and at the mercy of the fiends who had for some weeks made him a close prisoner in his apartment, coerced him into signing various documents in their favour, and, for the last few days, even kept him without food, he had for some time lain in expectation of being even more summarily dealt with. It is not surprising, therefore, that he now thought the dark hour had arrived.

His wife, who had for two years led him a life of misery, in comparison to which slavery at the galleys would have been pastime, had for the last three months been residing at the Hôtel Roussillon in Paris, having turned her sick husband over to the tender mercies of his respected Jew father-in-law.

When, therefore, the old gentleman beheld an athletic figure, in the garb of a common soldier, after the violent contest we have described, advancing towards him, he naturally looked upon himself as the bone of contention.

"The infernal scoundrels," he said, "cannot even agree in their villany. They have quarrelled about the spoil, before they have cut the victim's throat!"

With more agility than could have been expected from one so emaciated, he leaped to his feet upon the floor. The knife which the count had dropped upon the chair, beside the bed, caught his eye as he did so. Sick and weak as he was, the old gentleman possessed the courage of a lion: and with the sudden strength of despair, he seized the knife, and opposed himself to his supposed assailant.

The soldier was about to drop upon one knee before his father; when the latter hindered the movement by throwing himself upon him, and burying the knife in his son's bosom.

Ratcliffe Blount made no effort to ward off the blow, and fell heavily to the ground: whilst his father, exhausted by the effort he had made, also reeled and fell.

At this moment a stealthy step ascended the stairs, the door was cautiously opened, and the Asiatic visage of Mr. Levison was thrust into the apartment. Holding the light he carried on high, for some time he gazed into the room, with a countenance of terror and amazement; till, finding the occupants of the apartment apparently *hors de combat*, he ventured with stealthy pace to enter. After walking upon tip-toe a few steps, he stooped and gazed into the face of his late ally, and then came to the right about as hastily as if he feared that the assailant, who had thus strangely cut off his companion, was at hand to confer upon him a similar favour. Approaching next the prostrate form of the soldier, he thrust the light into his face, and recognised him.

"Ha!" said he, quickly, "Ratcliffe Blount!—and slain, too! No, no: mein Got, he breathes! The squire dead, too!" he continued, starting up and approaching the bed. "This is strange. But stay, it may be made much of: yes; however this has come about, it makes me secure."

Glancing round, he possessed himself of the fatal knife which lay beside the bodies; and raising it on high, was about to sheath it in the heart of the youth, when, at that moment, the sharp crack of a postillion's whip was heard beneath the casement.

"Hillo, ho, ho!" cried a voice at the same time; "within, there; what, ho! House, I say! Signor Brabantio, ho!"

A violent knocking also now shook the fore-door of the mansion; and the bell was assailed by a jerk, that tore it from its fastenings.

The Jew leaped to his feet at the sound, threw the knife to the farther end of the room, seized upon his lamp, threw open the chamber door, and, rushing down stairs, fled from the scene, along the passage by which Ratcliffe Blount had entered.

He had nearly gained the exterior, when he was met by the person who had clamoured for admittance; and who, unable to gain an entrance at the fore-door, had essayed the rear of the building, and the two ran against each other.

The thief thinks every bush an officer, it is said; and accordingly, the Jew made as violent an effort to pass out, as the traveller seemed determined to get into the house.

"Halloo! there, my master," said the traveller, keeping his opponent back; "after all this delay at the front, you seem in a vast hurry to attend us at the rear of your dwelling. Is this your country manners, comrade, that you knock folks down when they come for assistance, eh? Here's a carriage broken down in your lane, without the gates, and a party of ladies nearly frozen to death. I want assistance, or at least information where I am to seek it."

"In h—l, if you like," said the Jew; "for you'll get none here from me."

In saying this, the Jew made another effort to rush past, and the traveller immediately knocked him down with the heavy but-end of his riding whip, and entered the mansion.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"Now is Cupid a child of conscience,
He makes restitution."

SHAKSPERE.

IN the last chapter, we have seen two most opportune arrivals. The first comer was our unlucky acquaintance, Ratcliffe Blount; and the document from whence these circumstances have been gleaned, goes on further to state that the second unceremonious personage, who, after clamouring for admittance, forced his way into the interior of the château, was no other than his friend Altamont de Montdidier.

To account for his presence at this moment, it is sufficient to state, that having succeeded in crossing the Pyrenees with his fair charge, disguised as Spanish muleteers, he found it necessary to make a halt at Bayonne, in order to recruit her somewhat bated strength, and finding the church property he had thus appropriated to himself, like Macbeth's murders, "sticking on his hands," the fun of the adventure, also, having given place to reflection and consideration for the situation of his companion, he thought proper to marry her.

Whilst at Bayonne, he fell in with an English lady of rank, who had also just crossed the Pyrenees from Spain, and who, accompanied by her daughter, was endeavouring to make her way through France. Being without an escort, and rather choleric withal, she had been considerably annoyed during the journey:

and our friend de Montdidier instantly offered his services, joined their party, and, after a fashion sometimes practised by English gentlemen when travelling on the continent, he encased himself in jack-boots and a short-tailed jacket, and rode courier to his own carriage.

It was, then, on the night we have described, that, overtaken by the storm, in passing towards Caen, the self-constituted courier mistook his road, and the carriage having broken down in the deep ruts of the sandy lane leading to the Château Roussillon, he had ridden forward, dismounted from his steed, and making his way to the "lone chartereux," arrived at the very critical moment.

After he had overturned the wandering Jew, as we have described, and made good his entrance, rambling all over the lower regions without being able to find a soul to answer his shouts and outcries, ascending to the great hall, he continued his clamours.

"Poor house that keeps thyself," said he, pushing open the door of the room where the Count and Monsieur Levison had held their diabolical committee. "Ho! — Who's here?"

'If anything that's civil, speak; if savage,
Take or lend. What ho! no answer? then I'll enter.'

Here he found the remains of a goodly supper upon the table, a flask or two of champagne, a most inviting Périgord pie, a boar's head, big enough for the sign in Eastcheap, and half-a-dozen delicacies besides.

After refreshing himself with a glass of the champagne, which stood so invitingly upon the table, he resolved to proceed farther in his search, and straightway walked up stairs, with the intent of arousing the sleeping family; and arriving at the corridor, kicked open the door of the first apartment he came to.

Here he met with a sight, at which even his firm nerves were shaken; and starting back, more quickly than he had entered, he stood transfixed at the spectacle which presented itself.

Three prostrate bodies were upon the floor, the polished oak of which was crimsoned with the tide in which they lay. The gloom of the apartment, dimly lighted by the one solitary lamp which stood flickering upon the table, together with the deserted look of the building into which he had intruded, and which seemed only tenanted by the dead, quite overawed him; after gazing for a few minutes upon the sight before him, he felt inclined to turn about, and taking a flying leap down the great staircase by which he had just ascended, he ran out of the house as fast as he was able. As he continued, however, to gaze upon the bodies, he thought he beheld one of them move; the next moment a deep groan was uttered, and then a hand was raised a few inches, and dropped heavily upon the floor.

Stepping into the room, at the same time grasping his heavy hunting-whip in his hand, he looked around, raised the candle

from the table, and stooping down, peered into the face of the person who had thus shown signs of life. It was a man in the garb of a common soldier—his friend, Ratcliffe Blount!

Forgetting all his former fears, he set down the candle, raised him in his arms, took the flask of brandy from the pocket of his courier's jacket, and poured half the contents down the wounded man's throat. In fine, he succeeded in restoring his friend once more to life, and binding up his wounds, proceeded then to examine the state of the old gentleman who lay beside him; and he had the satisfaction, in a short time, of seeing both his patients in a somewhat better and more hopeful condition than he had found them in.

The wound which Ratcliffe Blount had received was a severe and dangerous one; and had the old gentleman possessed a trifle more strength, it would, doubtless, have been instantly mortal. As it was, the coming of his friend, Altamont de Montdidier, who was no contemptible surgeon, and who succeeded in stanching the blood, saved him. Sir Blount, too, as the Frenchman termed the father, he also had the happiness of restoring to his senses, by the aid of the same panacea he had administered to the son, namely, a draught from his flask of *eau de vie*. The Frenchman, however, puzzled him the most.

"This fellow," said he, "is peppered for this world, at all events. I think I see the sign-manual of my friend here," he continued, turning him over, and gazing upon his face; and then regarding the cudgel which lay beside him, he said, "And I, moreover, monsieur, suspect 'most foully did you play' for what you have gotten."

After returning to his belated party without, and guiding them through mud and mire to the château, which, without informing them of the events which had taken place, he hinted belonged to a friend of his own, he proceeded to do the honours of the mansion, setting the servants who had accompanied the travellers, to work, to make a glorious wood-fire upon the hearth, and serve out the refreshments the ladies stood so much in need of.

"Here, your grace," said he to the portly-looking personage, who, enveloped in furs, spread her extended palms over the grateful blaze of the crackling logs,—“Here, your grace, are the remains of a goodly supper, which the knave butler has, doubtless, been too idle to clear away. I entreat you, in the name of my friend, to do justice to the viands, after having so long been frozen in yonder inhospitable lane. Lady de Clifford,” he continued, “follow Mistress de Montdidier's example; after a glass of champagne, you see, she is already deeply engaged in discussing the merits of that *pâté de foie gras*.”

In short, Altamont not only managed to play the host to his fellow travellers, arranging matters for their accommodation during the night, stabling their horses, and aiding them in every possible way: he also contrived, soon after dawn, to procure the assistance of a surgeon for his friend, he himself attending to both the invalids during the intervals which he could devote to them.

Indeed, it was not till the next morning, through some *contre-temps*, or the prying curiosity of the chattering grisette, her maid, that her Grace of Hurricane discovered, to her astonishment, that the reason the host of the château had not made his appearance, was because he was unable, from illness, so to do; that his son also lay dangerously wounded in the chamber next to the one she herself had slept in, that Château Roussillon was the name of the mansion in which she had found a refuge, and that she was under obligation, for the hospitality of the said Château Roussillon, to the father of her eternal enemy, Ratcliffe Blount.

This was rather a disagreeable interruption to the harmony of the breakfast party: and Altamont de Montdidier, who had been suddenly called out of the room to his friend, whose wound had broken out afresh, returned to find the duchess with eyes extended, and no pleasant expression of countenance, listening in amazement to the story her maid had heard from Claude Maralli, the chasseur, who had gathered it from Pierre, the postillion, that *Sir* Blount had been shot through the head last night by a gang of robbers, and that his son, who had returned from the wars, had been nearly killed by the same ball, whilst the Count Roussillon himself was actually, at that moment, lying dead in the tapestried chamber above them.

"Mr. de Mont-di-dier," said her grace, with deliberation, "I am greatly obliged by your exertions in our favour here, and the refuge you have procured us; but, sir, I fear, in the present distressing circumstances of this family, we are greatly intruding. Will you, therefore, do me the favour to order my carriage round as soon as possible, that we may proceed onwards to Caen without delay?"

"It is quite unnecessary, Lady Hurricane," returned Altamont. "So far from our presence here being an intrusion, my friend would be delighted if we spent the Christmas here. Besides which, I cannot, at the present moment, leave the château, till I am assured of our hosts being out of danger."

"But I can, sir," returned the Duchess, drawing herself up; "and having particular reasons why I wish to reach Caen early, I must insist upon setting out forthwith. Carlostein," said she to the attending servant, "order the carriage out at once."

"It is impossible, Lady Hurricane," returned Altamont; "perfectly impossible, I assure you."

"Impossible! Sir," returned the Duchess; "how impossible?"

"Because I, this morning, lighted the kitchen fire with one of the hind wheels," said Altamont, turning off. "There was no wood cut in the château; the snow is a foot and a half deep without doors, and no water was boiled for breakfast."

* * * * *

The winter of the year 183— was a particularly severe one. The snow in the gardens of Château Roussillon was on a level with the hedge, whilst the park and open country around, in many places, also lay enrobed four or five feet deep in the same white garment.

“ Then icicles hung by the wall ;
 And milk came frozen home in pail ;
 Then blood was nipped, and ways were foul,
 And nightly sung the staring owl
 To-who :
 Tu-whit, to-who, a merry note,
 While Greasy Joan did keel the pot.”

Christmas day, on that same year, was kept at Château Rousillon, in the regular *Old English style*. The party, 'tis true, was but small ; but as they sat and feasted in the great hail of the château, looking down from the elevated position they occupied, upon the assembled domestics and dependants, who, seated at a lower board, discussed the roast beef, turkeys, plum-puddings, and minced pies, set before them, it was altogether a scene of hospitality, such as had not been witnessed in that mansion, at that festive season, for the last half century, at the least.

As soon as the tables were drawn, and the ladies had sipped their coffee in the withdrawing room, Altamont de Montdidier commenced organizing a little dance amongst the domestics, himself leading off with the Duchess of Hurricane, in order to set the thing going with proper spirit.

Ratcliffe Blount, meanwhile, was seated beneath the ample chimney-piece, holding converse sweet, and whispering a flattering tale in the ear of Lady de Clifford. He was still pallid from the effects of his wound, which, but for the unremitting care and attention bestowed upon him night and day, during the fever which had supervened, a care such as only the affection of woman can bestow, would have doubtless proved fatal.

On the other side of the hearth sat his respected sire, and the black-eyed bride of Altamont de Montdidier. As the old gentleman watched the pallid features of the returned prodigal, and blessed his own stars that he had been spared the dreadful retaliation he had so nearly inflicted upon the child who came to save ; improved too in health and strength, by the load of care that coming had relieved him from, as he listened to the cheerful sound of the French horn and tabor within the hall, contrasted with the violence of the storm without, he experienced a greater share of happiness than he had known for years.

* * * * *

The history of Ratcliffe Blount, now necessarily draws to a conclusion. Indeed all further circumstances connected with his subsequent fate we might, perhaps, never have had an opportunity of presenting to our readers, but from the perusal of a letter received by Lieutenant Snaffle, from Major Sabretash. The latter officer had been dedicating a twelvemonth's leave of absence to foreign travel, and whilst viewing the wonders of the world abroad, had fallen in with one or two of the *dramatis personæ* who have figured in the foregoing tale.

It happened that Lieutenant Snaffle, (by the way, he was now at the top of the list of lieutenants, with money lodged for the

purchase of his troop), chanced, whilst in the Emerald Isle, again to fall in with Captain Plume, and the meeting naturally leading them to recur to the subject of the curious manuscript they had perused in the cabaret at Ballyoflaherty, Lieutenant Snaffle offered to gratify the curiosity of his friend by reading part of the epistle he had received from Sabretash, a few days before. We therefore give the extract to our readers exactly as the Lieutenant gave it to Captain Plume.

MAJOR SABRETASH TO LIEUTENANT SNAFFLE.

"It is so long, my dear Snaffle, since I have had the favour of a line from you, that I am surprised at my own forgiving disposition, in condescending to write again. Not a bit of news have you given me since the —th Hussars left Canterbury, at least three months ago. Where I, indeed, to treat you according to your deserts, I should abandon so dilatory a correspondent; but, in truth, I have news of these parts, which I think likely to interest you. Ah, my dear fellow, Paris, and Naples, and Vienna, are all very well, but I sigh for those delightful scenes in which we were actors, during the last season in London. By the way, I have made use of my introductions, here at Vienna, and become acquainted with some splendid specimens of female excellence, various in style as the portraits which adorn the walls of the gorgeous palaces they dwell in. The Princess of Schloss Johannisberger, for instance, is a perfect specimen of the Rubens school. The Baroness Altenberg, again, is as dreamy-looking and lovely as her own Titian. Madame Vandenhenden might have sat for the spouse of Vandyke; whilst the Duchess of Landsdorffhausen is exactly like the portrait of good Queen Bess, by Hans Holbein. But to see them all waltz, my dear Snaffle, would be a year away from your life.

"There is, however, a something wanting about these foreign beauties, which I am at a loss exactly to define. They fall short, very short, of our own swan-like and peerless dames of Britain, such, for instance as a N——n, a S——d, or a Sey——r, with intellect throned in beauty. By the by, I was much struck with an English lady of title, whom I saw, the other night, at the Grand Duke's ball. The intelligence that rested upon her noble forehead, the delicately but proudly formed nose, the chiselled lip, that never parted but to show the pearly teeth within, altogether, made me desirous of gaining a nearer view of this fair creature, as she whirled along in the maze of the waltz. In doing so, I was induced to notice the cavalier whose arm she sought after the dance was over. Judge of my surprise, when, in the splendid regimental of an officer of Austrian Hussars, I recognised our friend, Ratcliffe Blount.

"After the first greetings were passed, he introduced me to the lady whose beauty had so struck me, the daughter of the Duchess of Hurricane, now Lady Constance Blount. His wars, he said, were now over. He had been married six months, and intended

to reside some years abroad. As I continued on terms of intimacy with them during my short stay at Vienna, I learned many things appertaining to his history, some of which will, I dare say, surprise you. Amongst other matters, he informed me that Wharncliffe Grange was being rebuilt, some coal-mines having been discovered on the estate, which had increased the value of the property at least a couple of hundred thousand pounds. The Levison party were at length dispersed and discomfited. The elder Israelite, after making his way to Paris, and informing his daughter of their intrigues being all blown, fled to America, in order to save himself from transportation. Mrs. Blount, senior, soon afterwards eloped to the same land of freedom, in company with Captain Catchflat, carrying with her all the property she had succeeded in scraping together, and her infant. The young cub being completely left in the lurch, turned bonnet to a hell in Paris; in which capacity he might, perhaps, have thriven, but for the impertinence of your old acquaintance, Captain de Montdidier. That most eccentric of individuals accompanied Lords Hardenbrass and Cœur de Lion, one night, to a hell, in the Rue Rivoli, carrying with them a sackfull of Napoleons, in order to break the bank. They would, no doubt, have succeeded, but for the circumstance of a row taking place during the play, and the Frenchmen showing fight. The two noblemen being unknown, de Montdidier persuaded young Levison to tweak Lord Hardenbrass by the nose; whilst Lieutenant Bullyman, who was also amongst the players, attempted to confer the same favour upon his companion. The consequence was easily to be conceived. Young Levison got so tremendous a thrashing that he has never recovered it. Mr. Bullyman suffered a similar martyrdom at the hands of Lord Cœur de Lion; and the whole party were arrested, and carried off to the guard-house.

“And now, my dear fellow, I think I have given you all the news that will interest you. Yet, stay, there are yet one or two of your friends I have not mentioned. Lady Hardenbrass, whom you remember as Miss Villeroy, has, I hear, been for some time separated from her husband; difference of temper is the alleged cause, she having turned Puseyite. Mrs. Allworthy still continues to spend half the year in foreign travel, and is expected shortly on a visit to Lady Blount, at Vienna. But the most extraordinary thing of all is, that Altamont de Montdidier, to whose society the Duchess of Hurricane took a great fancy, before the party broke up at Château Roussillon, managed to make up a match between her Grace and the elder Blount; and as the old gentleman still continued a great invalid, and both were rather warm in temper, he dispatched them off to Grafenberg, in Silesia, to the care of Vincent Priessnitz, to undergo the cold water cure.”

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